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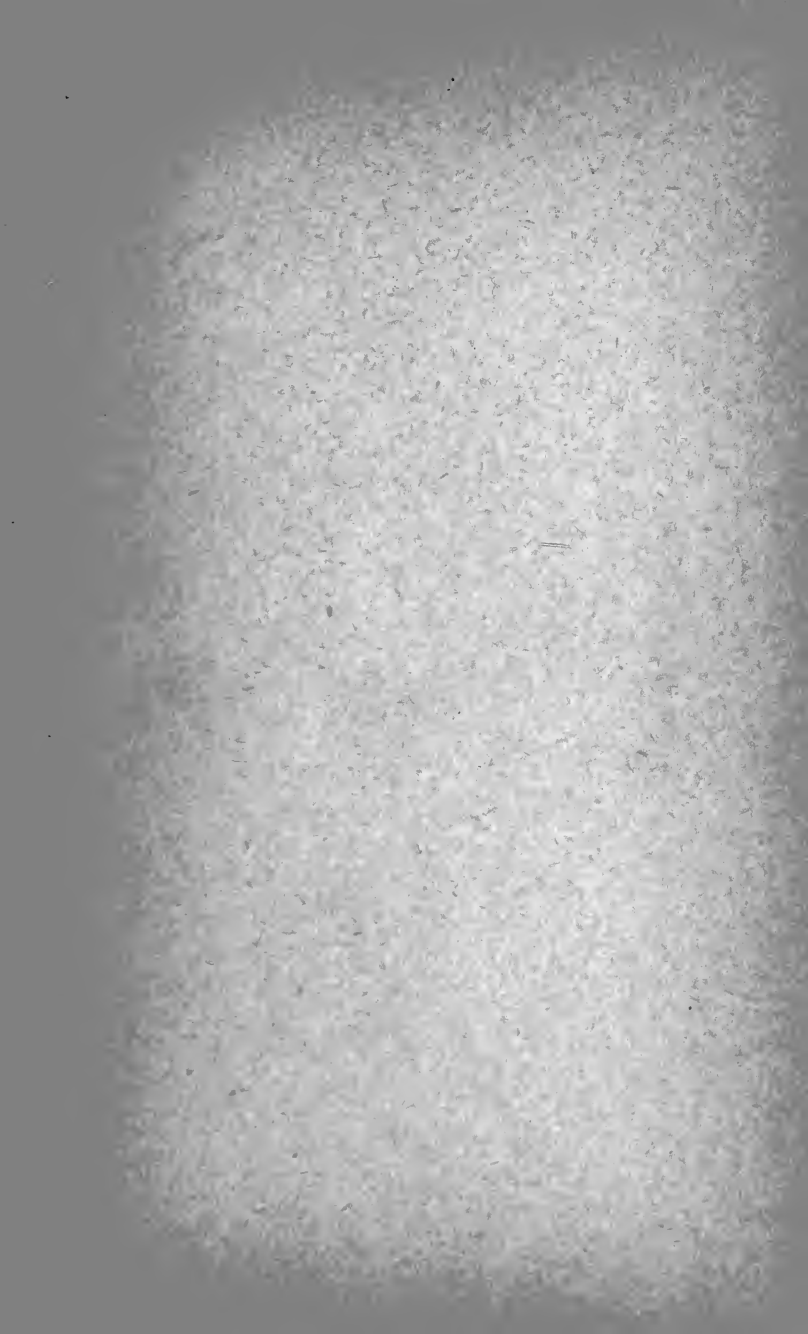
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# ELIJAH VINDICATED;

OR,

## THE ANSWER BY FIRE.

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BY

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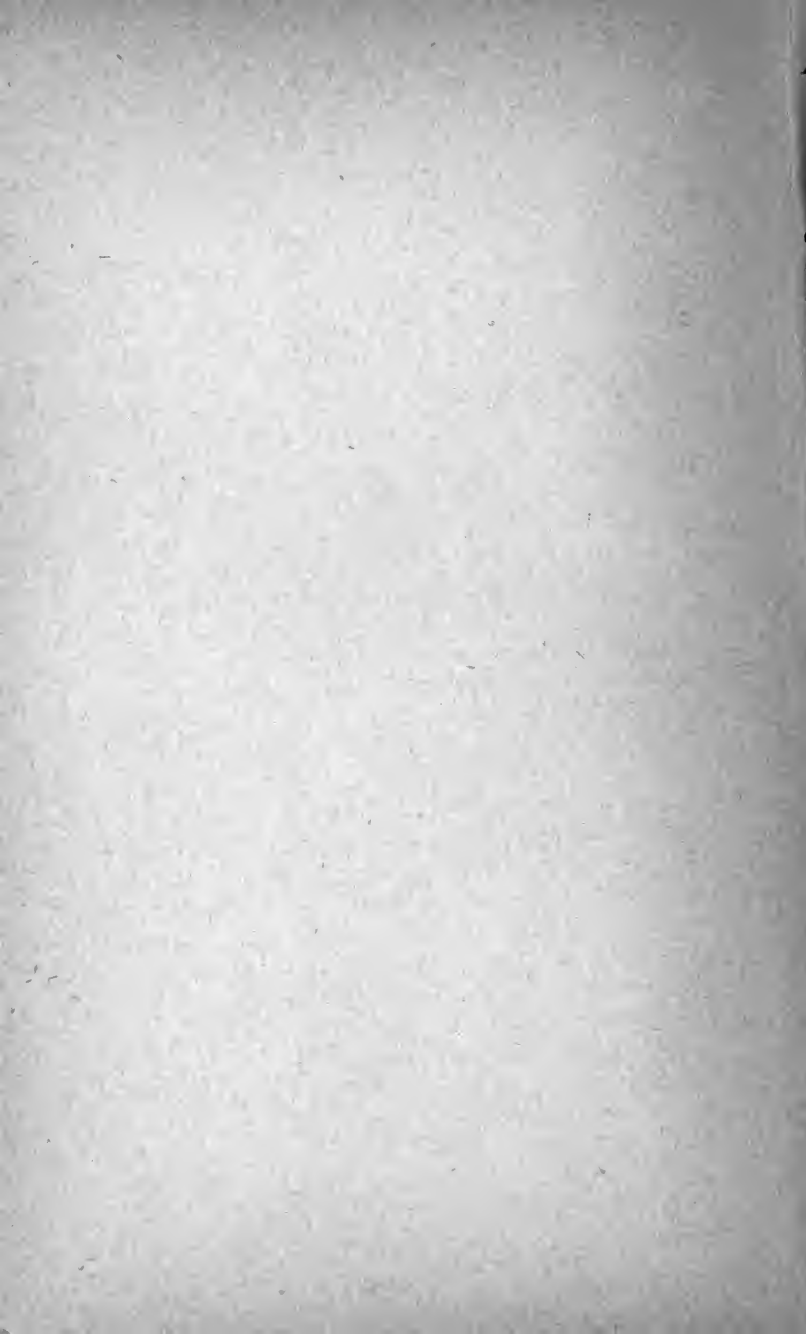


## PREFACE.

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THE author, believing that the contest waged on Carmel in the days of Elijah the Tishbite between the *Baalim* and the Personal God of Israel is still going on, sends forth the present work with the prayer that the God who answers by fire will attend it in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, and use it to promote the glory of his name, and extend the triumphs of his Son. No one, we are persuaded, will blame the largeness of the prayer who knows that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," and "the weak things of the world" to confound the things which are mighty;" and that it is not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit.

This book is written not to magnify Elijah, but Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his being, essence, or essential nature. Persuaded that he, who by fire answered his prophet on Carmel and by the baptism of the Spirit his apostles on Pentecost, is the only-begotten and well-beloved Son—proclaimed to be such at his baptism in Jordan and at his transfiguration on the mount—to him, and to the Church purchased with his own most precious blood, the author consecrates this his labor of love, with the prayer that he may soon confound and triumph over all the forms of Baalism, and be crowned, by all on earth and all in heaven, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.



## INTRODUCTION.

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AMONG the most valuable, because the most durable, products of modern research and investigation are those rapidly accumulating works which tend to explain and illustrate the historical parts of the Bible. The effort to recover all the geographical data concerning the Holy Land has been crowned with great success. Unexpected confirmations of Biblical statements have added invaluable material for the use of the defenders of inspiration, and painstaking laborers are constantly increasing the obligations we owe to public spirit and to private enterprise.

Availing himself of the latest information concerning the Palestine of the theocratic and royal periods, the author of this volume has produced a book which unites all the interest of a thrilling narrative with the moral and spiritual instruction usually found in a purely didactic work. He endeavors to give a picture of the times, the men, and the customs which will always be essential to the thorough appreciation of Biblical characters. With scholarly precision and exactness he combines a refined and poetical taste, which seizes upon the beautiful, the picturesque, and the impressive, and reads a lesson of value from every incident in the life of the noble Prophet of Carmel.

Dr. Clark joins issue with those who have underestimated, if they have not misrepresented, the bold, unfaltering, and consistent character of the prophet. He defends him with skill and, the reader will acknowledge, with success against the charge of unmanly weakness which has

been made against Elijah. In this book the prophet appears not as a reed, to be bent and overcome by the pressure of untoward circumstances, but as a sturdy oak, whose roots are centered in a foundation not to be removed, and which in the face of every storm abides undisturbed and immovable.

It is with no ordinary pleasure that we commend to the reading public a volume that will at once instruct the mind and improve the heart.

W. P. HARRISON, *Book Editor*

NASHVILLE, November, 1886.

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# ELIJAH VINDICATED.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE TISHBITE.

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ELIJAH came upon the world like an apparition; he went out of it in grandeur like a god. Among the greatest of the human race, whom God raised up to accomplish his designs, there has not been a greater than Elijah the Tishbite. Our blessed Lord, speaking of John the Baptist, tells us that among those born of woman there had not arisen a greater than the son of Zacharias. If our Lord had not affirmed this of his forerunner, we would have been prepared to infer it, and to believe it, from what the angel said to his aged father, when, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, Gabriel announced to Zacharias that John should go before the Lord God of Israel "in the spirit and power of Elias." But, however this may be, Elijah was unquestionably the greatest of the Old Testament prophets; and he was the most unique of all, either under the old or the new dispensation, who, by inspiration of God, left the deepest trace upon his Church. He was the most unique of all in person, in his habits of life, in character, in the grandeur of his miracles and manner of their performance, and in his entrance upon his work and departure from it.

The first notice we have that such a man was in existence is thus told: "*And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of*

*Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*" He is Elijah the Tishbite! What does this designation mean? Is it a patronymic? and was there any other who was so called? Was it an appellation of Elijah alone? Was he so named because of its appropriateness to his work? to something that he had done, or to something in his character or habits? If there was no country, or city, or village from which the designation was received, was it taken from some unknown and isolated spot where Elijah was born? was it the name of his own home? of his own dwelling, or of some secret cave in Gilead, where he led a lonely and recluse life? No one can answer. All is conjecture. We know some suppose it was the same as the place in Naphtali, mentioned in the apocryphal book of Tobit, and called *Thisbe* in the Septuagint. But the book of Tobit was not written until about two hundred years after Elijah's time. There is no evidence, therefore, that in Elijah's day there was in existence such a place as the place of Naphtali; for the town in Naphtali—mentioned only in Tobit, and that but once—may have derived its name from the prophet, and not the prophet his designation from it. The Septuagint translators, in 1 Kings xvii. 1, thus introduce Elijah: "*Καὶ εἶπεν Ἠλιὸν ὁ προφήτης Θεσβίτης ὁ ἐκ Θεσβῶν τῆς Γαλαὰδ*—'the Thesbite, who is of Thesbe of Gilead.'" If this *Thesbe* was in Gilead, it was not the same as *Thisbe* in Naphtali, for the names are spelled differently by the same translators, and the tribe of Naphtali had no inheritance in Gilead. Gilead was on the east of the Jordan; the possessions of Naphtali were on the west, extending south to north from the Lake Chinnereth to the spurs of Lebanon, and east to west from the Jordan to the borders of Asher.

Neither can we see any appropriateness in the meanings—that "makes captives," that "turns back," that "recalls," or



that "dwells"—which have been assigned to the prophet's appellation. Nor do we know that it means "the reformer," as some have supposed. Elijah was indeed a reformer; and this fact, we suspect, was father to the thought that gave such interpretation to the prophet's designation. Whatever its meaning, it is as unknown to us as are the names of Elijah's father and mother. Where all is conjecture, we will not venture an opinion. The very designation of the prophet is a part of the impenetrable mystery in which all his life, before his appearing to Ahab, is designedly shrouded.

But he was "of the inhabitants of Gilead"—thus says King James's Version. Where Gilead was we know. It was east of the Jordan, and it was the possession of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. And we know something of the nature of the country, and something of the character of the inhabitants. It was a mountainous country, "a hard, rocky region," as the name implies; and its inhabitants were as hard and rugged as the rocks of its mountains. But the saying, He was "of the inhabitants of Gilead," does not necessarily inform us that Gilead was his birthplace, or that he was descended from one of the tribes to which Gilead was assigned. He may have been born elsewhere—in Thisbe of Naphtali, it may be—and afterward made Gilead his dwelling-place; or, if born in Gilead, he may have been born of parents who belonged to some other tribe whose inheritance was on the west of the Jordan. The Revised Version translates, "who was of the sojourners of Gilead." If this be the true rendering, it may mean that the prophet was not a permanent inhabitant, but a temporary resident; and how long detained in that "obscure sojourn," no one is able to tell. But wherever born, though no mention is made of his parents or tribe, the prophet, doubtless, was a lineal descendant of Abraham.

and "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." What, then, in the absence of positive knowledge, is the inference from the saying, He was "of the inhabitants of Gilead?" While it may be true the prophet was born in Gilead, or, having been born elsewhere, had taken up his abode there, and so had become one of its inhabitants, it is certain he was of "the inhabitants of Gilead" in the sense that his character and habits of life possessed certain characteristics of the Gileadites—that he was as hard and rugged as they, as flinty and enduring as their rocks.

It has been said that an inhabitant of Gilead, in the days of Elijah, was to an inhabitant of Judea, or Samaria, as a Highlander in Scotland to a Lowlander in the days of the Great Marquis Montrose. Elijah was indeed the most weird-like, the most romantic of all the characters of the sacred Scriptures. As weird-like as Meg Merrilies in "Guy Mannering," or as Norna of the Fitful Head in "The Pirate," was Elijah among inspired men in the Book of God. And yet, unique as he was, there were at least two characters in the sacred narrative who bore some resemblance to the Tishbite. The Baptist, whose raiment of camel's hair was girded by a leathern girdle about his loins, on whose head no razor was ever used, and whose meat was locusts and wild honey, bore a striking likeness to the Tishbite, with his coarse sheep-skin mantle, and leathern girdle, and shaggy hair. The Tishbite, like the Baptist after him, was secluded in his habits, simple in his tastes, austere in his life, and mingled not in the haunts of men. Except the time spent under the humble roof of the widow woman of Zarephath, Elijah's abode, so far as we know, was ever some mountain-cave, or some rocky dell by pebbled brook or shaded spring. And there is another who bears some marked resemblance to the Tishbite. There are certain things about the prophet which at once suggest the name

of Melchisedec. Like that mysterious King of Salem, and priest of the Most High God, neither father nor mother, nor descent, nor beginning of days nor end of life, has been assigned to Elijah. There is no record of the prophet's parents. Whoever they were, they have no place in the genealogical tables of the Hebrews. And though, in all probability, not of the tribe of Levi—to which tribe alone belonged the priesthood—Elijah, like Melchisedec, and in that respect like Samuel also, was a priest, as well as a prophet of Jehovah. For what was the sacrifice on Carmel but a priestly sacrifice?

And what was Elijah's training for the work to which he was called? Elijah trained Elisha; but who trained Elijah? We know Abraham's father, and we know his history from his call out of Ur of Chaldees, till his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave of Machpelah. The story of Moses's life is familiar to us from the cradle of bulrushes, laid in the flags by the river's brink, until the Lord "buried him in a valley in the land of Moab." We follow Samuel from the time Elkanah brought him to the house of the Lord in Shiloh till all Israel "buried him in his own house at Ramah." We know David from the sheep-fold to the sepulcher on Mount Zion. We know the story of the Baptist from the message of Gabriel to Zacharias till he was beheaded in prison by King Herod. And we know much, and may infer much more, of the life of St. Paul, from his childhood in Tarsus, on the banks of the Cydnus, till his martyrdom in Rome. And so too with many other illustrious worthies of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. But about Elijah, before his appearing to Ahab, we know absolutely nothing.

Again, Elijah was unique in his manner of announcing the commands or messages of Jehovah. Call to remembrance the announcement to Ahab: "*As the Lord God of*

*Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*" But according to my word! The prophet is not repeating a message which he has received from God in the very words of God. He does not introduce the message with a "*Thus saith the Lord,*" and then give the very words of Jehovah. Elijah uses neither the *oratio directa* nor the *oratio obliqua*; neither the precise words of God directly nor their substance indirectly. He does not say, giving Jehovah's very words, "*As I live,*' saith the Lord God of Israel, '*there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*'" Nor does he say, stating the words of God indirectly, "The Lord God of Israel swears that, as he liveth, there shall neither be dew nor rain these years, but according to his word." Elijah speaks to Ahab by neither of these methods. For the words which he speaks he speaks as if they were his own, and not Jehovah's. He speaks, doubtless, by Jehovah's authority, and by Jehovah's inspiration. But he swears by the Lord God of Israel that the words which he speaks as his own are true. He calls the self-existent and ever-living God, in whose presence he consciously stands, to witness to the truth of what he says to Ahab, invoking the wrath and curse of the Almighty upon his own head if he speak falsely and prove to be no true prophet. For all this is meant when one swears by Jehovah; and it was thus Elijah swore. "As truly," he swears, "as the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, I, Elijah the Tishbite, call Jehovah to witness that, according to my word, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, and that, according to my word alone, shall they return to the earth." What daring impiety! what wicked presumption! if Elijah be no true prophet, and if he speak not by inspiration of God. But what exaltation of his prophet, if Jehovah made the dew and rain for years to depend upon his prophet's

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word! And what sublime and heroic faith has the prophet, to swear that, according to his word, the dew and rain should cease, and that not until he spoke the word should they return to the earth! For much easier was it, and much less of faith did it require, to deliver, directly or indirectly, the very words of God, and to leave their fulfillment to some word which God himself must speak, and not to some word which the prophet must utter. Grand prophet of God! Grand, in that faith and courage were equal to the momentous test to which Israel's God subjected them.

## CHAPTER II.

### BAAL AND ASHTORETH.

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ELIJAH appears at the most critical period in the history of the kingdom of Israel. Ahab, seventh king of Israel, had married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, King of Tyre and Sidon, and priest of Baal. The six kings of Israel who went before him were very wicked and idolatrous kings. *“But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.”* This Phenician princess, whose name is a synonym for all that is imperious, cruel, and vindictive, was bent on introducing the idolatrous worship of her father into the kingdom of her husband. To accomplish her purpose, she scrupled not at the means. It seemed to her an easy task to mold the pliant king to her wishes. She succeeded so far as to prevail on her husband to make the gods of Phenicia gods of Israel, and the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth the supreme worship of himself, and of his court and people; and to wink at, if he did not approve, her purpose to dethrone the Lord God of Israel, and exterminate his worship. Hence the prophets of Jehovah—except the one hundred whom the good Obadiah hid in a cave and secretly fed—were slain, and his altars thrown down. The priests of Baal and Ashtoreth became the established and pampered ministers of the religion of the State; everywhere incense was offered upon their altars; suppliant knees bowed down before, and impious lips kissed, the images of these gods of Tyre and Sidon. It will thus be seen that the sin of Ahab went much farther than the sin of Jeroboam, and the sins of the five kings who

succeeded the latter—Nadab, and Baasha, and Elah, and Zimri, and Omri. When Jeroboam revolted against Rehoboam, the son and successor of Solomon, and established the separate kingdom of Israel, fearing, if the ten tribes went up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, that their hearts would turn again to their former king, and that they would kill him and go over to the King of Judah, he made two calves of gold, and set up one in Bethel, and put the other in Dan, saying: "*It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*" By this act Jeroboam did no more than Aaron, who, while Moses delayed in the mount, made, out of the golden ear-rings of the wives and sons and daughters of the people, a molten calf, and, with his own hands, fashioned it with a graving-tool. The formula, or ritual, which Jeroboam used when he set up the calves in Bethel and Dan was the same which Aaron employed when he set up the molten image before Horeb. "*These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,*" was Aaron's formula before the molten image at Horeb; it was, as we have seen, Jeroboam's before the calves in Bethel and Dan.

Neither did Jeroboam, nor Aaron before him, intend, by the golden calves, to supplant the worship of Jehovah, or to set up any other god before the Lord God of Israel. The golden calves both Jeroboam and Aaron meant to be but representative figures of Jehovah, and symbolic images of his person and divinity. In Jeroboam's case, the golden images had also a special political significance. Well knowing with what religious veneration and pride every pious Hebrew regarded the magnificent temple of Jehovah on Mount Zion, and how their imaginations were impressed and inflamed by the splendid ritual observed in its worship, the King of Israel was afraid these things would lead

his people to make frequent pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and draw their hearts back again to its king. To prevent this, and to destroy the spiritual as he had destroyed the political unity of the kingdom of David and Solomon, one of the calves Jeroboam set up in Dan, the extreme northern limit of the new kingdom of Israel, and the other in Bethel, on its extreme southern boundary, twelve miles from Jerusalem. These seats of religious worship it was his purpose to make national, and so to build them up and adorn them that they might rival, if not surpass, the splendid temple which David planned and Solomon built. It was on Bethel Jeroboam seems most to have relied to effect his object; for it was a place most venerable by its antiquity, and by its sacred and historic associations. It had, of old, been venerated as the house of God, and the gate of heaven. It was there, in a dream by night, Jacob had his vision of God while on his way to seek his wife in Haran; and it was there he set up the stone on which he had slept, and on which he poured the oil, consecrating it to the worship of the God of his fathers; it was there, on his return from Padan-aram, he received the special blessing of Jehovah, and had his name changed to Israel. It was there, before there was a king in Israel, the people went up to seek counsel of God; it was there the ark of the covenant of God was deposited in the days of Phineas; and it was there Samuel held one of his itinerant courts in his annual circuit, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

It was by such means Jeroboam aimed to build up the new and rival kingdom of Israel, and establish himself firmly on its throne. In all this his purpose was not to dethrone Jehovah, or to supplant his worship by another. He intended Dan and Bethel to be seats of Jehovah's worship, just as Shiloh had been the seat of his tabernacle, and as Jerusalem was then the seat of his temple. But as the



molten calf, which Aaron set up before Horeb, became an object of idolatrous worship, so likewise the golden calves which Jeroboam placed in Dan and Bethel received divine honors. And as God was angry with the people because they worshiped Aaron's molten calf, and offered burnt-offerings upon its altar, so too was his wrath kindled against those who worshiped and offered sacrifices to Jeroboam's golden images. And he was wroth with both, because both had broken the second commandment of the Lord their God, which says: "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.*"

But while this was so, and the sin of Jeroboam, and the sin of Aaron, was very great, yet neither, we repeat, purposed to proclaim another God and introduce his worship. This is what Ahab did. That daring and impious king not only violated the second, but presumptuously broke the first commandment: "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" By the superior worship paid to Baal and Ashtoreth; by the higher honors given to the priests of these false Phenician gods; by the persecution and slaughter of the prophets of Jehovah, and the overthrow of his altars, Ahab not only put Baal and Ashtoreth on an equality with the God of Israel, but exalted them above him. His object was not to refuse divinity to Jehovah, but to deny his supreme godhead as the only living and true God of the universe, besides whom there is none other. He was willing to assign him a place in the Pantheon of gods, but would not

allow he was the only Supreme Being, to whom alone worship must be paid. He might be as Bel in Assyria, or Osiris in Egypt, or Jove in Greece, the supreme tutelary divinity of the rival kingdom of Judah, or of any other that might elect him to be the supreme object of divine worship. But he was resolved, whatever Jehovah's rank in other kingdoms, he should not have the supreme but a subordinate place in the kingdom of Israel. Who should be supreme God in Samaria, Ahab claimed it was his sole prerogative to determine. And as he preferred the gods of Phenicia, he proclaimed the gods of his queen to be the supreme divinities of Israel, and that in his realm Baal and Ashtoreth should divide the sovereignty between them. Baal, and his priests, he took under his own immediate care; Ashtoreth, and her priests, he left to the care of Jezebel; both Baal and Ashtoreth, their priests and their worship, he kept under his kingly protection. How far Jezebel approved a plan which permitted divine worship, though subordinate to the worship of her country's gods, to be paid to the God of the people of her husband and king, we have no means of knowing. A part of this arrangement, no doubt, met her heartiest approval—the exaltation of Baal and Ashtoreth above the God of the Hebrews. But to that part of the comprehension which allowed divinity to the God of Abraham she yielded, if she yielded at all, a reluctant consent; for it was, without dispute, her desire to grant him no share whatever in divine worship. It was rather the design of this restless, ambitious, and idolatrous woman to dethrone Jehovah in Samaria altogether, to destroy his worshippers, and to utterly root out his service. But in this extreme view, she could neither carry with her the Hebrew subjects of the king, her husband, nor the king himself. Wicked as Ahab was, idolatrous as he was, and as much as his pliant mind was under the sway of his

haughty, strong-minded, and unscrupulous wife, he still retained, as governor of his house, the good Obadiah, who refused to worship Baal. Nor could Ahab so far forget the past history of his race, and the wonderful and miraculous providences of the Lord God of hosts in their behalf, as to deny all divinity to him who, with his strong right-arm, had brought his fathers out of their house of bondage in Goshen. And as to the people whom he ruled, it was impossible for them to blot out of their memories all recollection of the wonders which the Lord God of their fathers had wrought, of old, in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness of Sinai. All that Ahab, therefore, could hope to do was to bring them to acknowledge that there were other gods besides Jehovah, and that Baal and Ashtoreth, gods of the Zidonians, were gods as well as he. But to which—whether to Baal and Ashtoreth, or to Jehovah—the supreme divine sovereignty was due, the great mass of Ahab's Hebrew subjects were at a loss to decide. They were willing to pay divine honors to Baal and Ashtoreth, but not to them exclusively. Indeed, they halted between two opinions; they hesitated to determine which was supreme. Admitting both Baal and Jehovah to be gods, they worshiped both, and sought to unite their worship. It seems they went farther, and aimed at a union of personality between them, and worshiped both in one, under the name of Jehovah-Baal. We shall see this thought more clearly developed when we come to the question which Elijah put to assembled Israel on Mount Carmel: "*How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.*"

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BAALIM.

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**B**UT we must not suppose the worship of Baal and Ash-toreth was a new and unheard-of thing in Israel until introduced by Ahab and Jezebel. Even in Moses's day many of the children of Israel, beguiled by the Moabites and Midianites, joined themselves unto their god Baal-peor, attended on his sacrifices, and bowed down before his image. Against these Hebrew idolaters the anger of the Lord God was kindled; four and twenty thousand of them perished by a plague. But, notwithstanding this signal display of divine wrath against their idolatry, the next generation returned to the worship of the tutelary god of Moab and Midian. In the days of the Judges "*the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines.*" And this idolatry continued more or less prevalent in Israel—except during the judgeship of Gideon—till Samuel, having prevailed on the people to return to the God of their fathers, banished it from the land.

From this it will be seen the worship of Baal and Ash-toreth was observed in Israel long before the times of Elijah. The religion of these gods was an old religion. It was at least contemporary with the law given to Moses on Sinai; it doubtless existed years before his day, though not always called by the same name, nor always presenting the same modifications. Indeed, in different countries, and in

different parts of the same country, it was known by different names, or by different modifications of the same name. Baal, *lord* or *master*, was supreme, and is universally recognized to be the sun-god. But Baal was called by different names, and under different modifications of attributes and symbols. At Shechem he was Baal-berith, *the covenant lord*; in Moab and Midian he was Baal-peor, so called, it is thought, from Mount Peor in Moab; in Ekron he was Baal-zebub, *the god of flies*. Baal was also prefixed to the names of several different places, as Baal-gad, near Mount Hermon, and Baal-hazor, "where Absalom kept his flocks and held his sheep-shearing feast." The god of the Phenicians was Baal-shamen, or Baal-shamayim, *lord of the heavens*, and Baal-melkarth, *the king of the city*. Baal-chamman also, *the lord of heat*, is found on Phenician inscriptions; and there are still other tribal modifications of the name. Baal, *the supreme lord* of the Zidonians, is probably always meant in the sacred Scriptures whenever Baal is used by itself. The seat of Baal-melkarth was at Tyre, where Hiram, the Tyrian king, built him a splendid temple, which, like the contemporary temple of Jehovah he aided Solomon in building at Jerusalem, was adorned with the costly gifts of many nations. In the Hebrew Scriptures the Phenician Baal also has the article prefixed, and is *the* Baal. The plural also appears, and with the article—the Baalim—and when so used it is associated with Ashtaroth, the plural of Ashtoreth; and then *the* Baalim is a general designation to include all the heathen gods known to the Hebrews, whatever their distinctive titles or modifications of characteristics and emblems.

Baal—and its modifications likewise—was always masculine, and never represented a female divinity. Ashtoreth was the name which designated the goddess of the old Canaanites, the Syrians, the Phenicians, and the heathen

Hebrews. Baal was the sun; Ashtoreth was the moon. Ashtoreth is the singular; Ashtaroth is the plural. Ashera also occurs, and is supposed by many to be identical with Ashtoreth; others think that Ashera is the goddess of the Southern, and Ashtoreth the goddess of the Northern Canaanites. It is said that Ashera generally, and Ashtoreth sometimes, is associated with the singular Baal; but Ashtaroth is always found with the plural Baalim. The translators of the Hebrew in our Authorized Version, following the Septuagint, have perplexed us no little by translating Ashera "*grove*." In the Revised Version it is untranslated. Wherever the word occurs, the Revised Version takes it to be the name of the Zidonian goddess. There are those who claim that Ashtoreth is the proper name of the goddess, and that Ashera is the designation of the idol, or symbol. However this may be, Ashera and Ashtoreth were either one and the same, or, if different divinities, were the chief goddesses of the ancient Oriental heathen, whether these heathen were Gentiles or Hebrews. The only difference, if any, we suspect, between Ashera and Ashtoreth was that they respectively represented certain different modifications of attributes and symbols, while the general attributes and symbols were the same in both, the special modifications depending mainly, if not altogether, on the culture, habits, and morals of their respective votaries. And this view is confirmed, if it be true, as is claimed, that Ashera represents a foul and Ashtoreth a chaste goddess. As Baal-peor, the god of Moab and Midian, was the most sensual of all the modifications of Baal, and his rites the most obscene, Ashera, and not Ashtoreth, was the goddess associated with him. But it must be confessed, if Ashtoreth was a chaste goddess, she was only such by comparison with Ashera; for the worship of Ashtoreth was not unfrequently deformed by the prostitution of unmarried

girls, and by obscenities that must not be mentioned. A like difference is to be noticed in Baal and his followers; the only difference in the special modifications of the attributes and symbols of the god was in the character, æsthetic tastes, and culture of the worshipers. Outside of a divine revelation, the gods of a people will be no higher than the people who serve them. According as the worshipers are groveling, sensual, and licentious, or high-minded, spiritual, and virtuous, so will be the gods they worship. This accounts for differences among different peoples in the attributes and symbols of the same god. There is no question but that the Baal of the Phenicians and Carthaginians was the Belus of the Assyrians, the Osiris of the Egyptians, and the Apollo of the Greeks. The differences in the attributes and symbols of these divinities may be ascribed to certain differences in the respective peoples who paid them divine honors. Each of these gods—whether Phenician, Assyrian, Egyptian, or Grecian—represented the same generic thought. The god, by whatever name called—whether Baal, Belus, Osiris, or Apollo—symbolized the male principle of life, the generative force or the creative energy in nature. And what has been said of the generic Baal may be said of the generic Ashera, or Ashtoreth. As Baal is generically the same as Belus, Osiris, and Apollo, so Ashera, or Ashtoreth, is generically the same as the Ishtar of the Assyrians, the Isis of the Egyptians, and the Cytherean Aphrodite, or the Paphian Aëstarte, of the Greeks. As the gods represented the male principle of life, or generative power of nature, so the goddesses represented the female principle of life, or its fructifying energy. And as the gods differed among themselves, so the goddesses differed in attributes and symbols, modified by the culture and character of their respective worshipers.

The Assyrians, the Egyptians, and very notably the

Greeks, had higher conceptions of Deity than the Zidonians of Tyre and Carthage. The Apollo Belvedere, the marble statue of the god found near Antium toward the end of the fifteenth century, with its exquisite symmetry, a model of intellectual and physical beauty, contrasted with the rude and grotesque images of Baal on Phenician coins, well represents the difference between the Greek and the Zidonian ideal of the sun-god. The Osiris of the Egyptians, reclaiming them from barbarism, giving them wise and wholesome laws, teaching them agriculture, and spreading the blessings of civilization as the Nile, by the rise and fall of its waters, spreads broadcast the fertilizing and harvest-bearing soil, was a much higher conception than the Zidonian Baal. And the Assyrian Belus, it is averred, was a conception of the divine which the Phenicians never reached; for the Assyrians regarded their god as "no mere solar or planetary god." In the Chaldean cosmogony, Bel is "the shaper of heaven and earth, the creator of men and beasts, and of the luminaries of heaven;" in the Phenician, Baal is "a mere power of nature, born, like the other luminaries, from the primitive chaos."

But what great difference is there between the Assyrian and the Phenician god? In the Assyrian cosmogony, Bel is the sun-god; so is Baal in the Phenician. The sun is the generative power in both; and, therefore, in both the sun is god. And the same conclusion is reached whether the sun be "the shaper of heaven and earth" or "a mere power of nature;" for if the sun as "a mere power of nature" has the same generative force which the sun has as "the creator of men and beasts," then the one is just as much God as the other. Both alike received the highest divine honors, both alike were worshiped through the medium of images, and both were fashioned into idols by men's hands. In Isaiah we may learn what was thought



of the Assyrian Bel. Hear the word of the Lord, spoken by his prophet Isaiah: "*Bel boweth down, Nebo [the Mercury of the Greeks and the Anubis of the Egyptians] stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle; . . . they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.*" Bel and Nebo are represented by the Hebrew prophet as unable to bear their worshipers. On the contrary, they must themselves be borne by beasts of burden, which, wearied, stoop and bow down beneath the heavy load of dumb idols on their backs. Compare the Lord God of hosts with these dumb and senseless idols of gold and silver, lavished out of the bag and weighed in the balances, which the hired goldsmith transmutes and makes into a god. Listen to the words which the God of Israel further speaks by his prophet: "*Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb; and even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.*" The Assyrian god and the Phœnician god had their only existence in the dumb and senseless images of wood, or stone, or bronze, or silver, or gold. Equally mythical were the Egyptian Osiris and the Greek Apollo; equally vain the imaginations which conceived them. The only difference between even the Apollo of the Greeks and the Baal of the Zidonians is the difference between a beautiful statue of marble and a rude and shapeless figure of wood. Both are insensate, and have no more creative energy than their symbols.

Every claim to creative, generative, or fructifying energy outside of the personal Lord God of the Hebrews dethrones him, and makes that god in which such energy resides.

Whether this force resides in Baal, in Belus, in Osiris, or in Apollo; whether the force itself be some mythical personal god, or "a mere power of nature;" or whether it be protoplasm, or molecules, or self-moved and self-positing atoms—if it have creative, generative, fructifying energy, it must be very and eternal God. The Lord God of Israel is dethroned, and another omnific, almighty, and creative God is set up. What the Hebrew Scriptures represent the Lord God of Israel as doing by the mere word of his power, the God who takes his place has done, by slow processes, through eternal ages. But the form of opposition to the personal God of the Bible suggested by this remark belongs chiefly to the ancient and modern infidel science.

The material universe is a fact which comparatively few with Berkeley, who arrived at his conclusion from the theory of Locke, have denied. What we see with our eyes, what we touch, what we handle with our hands, must be no ideal, but real and material things. Matter exists; and to man it has always existed since the first man, whatever his origin, came into being. And if the first man was endowed with intellect, with perception, and with reason, he must have asked himself the question, How does matter exist? what is its origin? and by what laws is it governed? Hence, to account for the existence of matter, and to ascertain its laws, in all the ages of man, has engrossed human thought, and been the object of human inquiry. The Hebrew Scriptures ascribe its existence to a personal, self-existent, self-dependent, absolute, and eternal God. They who were without, or who denied a direct revelation from heaven, have either ascribed all matter to chance, or to some god of their own imagination, or to some generative power of nature, or to some inherent force or energy in the first atoms. With these atoms the investigations of infidel scientists stop; they cannot, they dare not, go beyond them

and tell us their origin. Were the first atoms material, and only material? and from them are all things produced? Then the original atoms had all the creative power ascribed to the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. But was this creative, generative force not the atoms themselves, but some inherent creative energy in the atoms? Then this energy is the God who created all things. But was there, so to speak, but one primordial atom? Then this primordial atom is the one supreme God, from which all things—the sun, the moon, the stars; all things visible and invisible; all things animate and inanimate: all life, vegetable and animal; all spirit, all intellect, all thought, are derived. But was there in the beginning an infinite number of atoms, or elementary particles, equal in kind but unequal in form, each producing genera and species after their respective kinds? Then are these gods legion, outnumbering beyond conception all the gods embraced in all the mythologies of the world. No Pantheon of the most liberal Pantheist ever had any measurable part as many gods as science. But is all this infinite number of atoms not so many different gods, but one indivisible, omnific, and eternal God? Then we have a mystery infinitely surpassing the Trinity in Unity of the Holy Scriptures.

It is not difficult to see how a heathen philosopher, a devout student of nature, without the knowledge of any direct revelation from God, was led to reject the gods of Assyria and Egypt, of Phenicia and Greece. He knew that neither sun nor moon nor stars, shining through eternal ages, could of themselves create one grain of sand or blade of grass. Equally persuaded was he that the heathen gods of his times were unable to perform a single creative act. Believing—as he did believe—that matter had an indefinite past, and knowing that the heathen gods themselves had a beginning ascribed to their existence, he was persuaded that the gods

of the heathen were no gods. As matter existed, according to his belief, ages before the gods themselves, it was a very easy thing for him to believe that there was immeasurably more divinity in matter than in them. And hence it was also a very easy thing to conclude that matter is eternal, and that it has in itself the generative and creative power.

The first, perhaps, who gave definite form to this opinion was Leucippus. When or where that philosopher was born is unknown. About B.C. 460 one was born in Abdera in Thrace, who, with great force, defended and illustrated the teachings of Leucippus. Democritus taught that there is, in infinite space an infinite number of atoms, "homogeneous in kind but heterogeneous in form;" that these atoms combine with one another; that all things arise from the infinite variety of these combinations. Hence, too, the almost endless variety of matter in form, in weight, in size, in density, in color, and in all its properties. According to this cosmical, or atomic, theory, the atoms are the ultimate cause of all things—of matter and mind, of body and spirit. They are themselves uncaused, and, being uncaused, must have existed from all eternity. As they have always been in motion, eternal likewise are their motions. These motions have produced the universe. Fire and soul, according to this theory, are of one nature; both are material. Hence, when the body dies, the soul perishes with it. There is nothing eternal but the atoms and their motions; and there is no creative nor generative force but in them. This atomic theory had a powerful ally in the Greek Epicurus; but the system was afterward most grandly illustrated and most eloquently maintained in the *De Rerum Natura* of the Roman Lucretius, a philosophical work of marvelous power and beauty, and confessedly the greatest of didactic poems. There is nothing in the universe, he contends, that

does not admit of explanation, and that too without recourse to a supreme personal Creator of all things.

It is easy to see that all these forms of opposition to the God of the Hebrews are modifications of the Baalism of Ahab. The contest against a supreme personal God is the contest which he waged; it was the contest which was going on years before him, and it is the contest going on at this day. This debate has assumed many forms, but it has been in all ages one and the same. It is still kept up, though the Baal, the Belus, the Osiris, and the Apollo—and all the other gods, by whatever name called, of the ancient Oriental peoples known to the Hebrews, and of the Greeks and Romans—have long ago been relegated to forgetfulness or oblivion. Indeed, what the Lord God predicted by his prophet Hosea came to pass soon after the captivity in Babylon—viz., the abolition of idol-worship in Israel: "*And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi [my husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [my lord]. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.*" And after the introduction of Christianity, the preaching of Christ and him crucified eventually put an end, throughout the Roman Empire, to the old idol-worship, to the idols themselves, and to the gods they symbolized. But, though "the intelligible forms of ancient poets" and "the fair humanities of old religion" have long ago "vanished," and live no longer in the "faith of reason," yet the old philosophy of Leucippus and Democritus, of Epicurus and Lucretius, still survives and wages relentless war against the personal God of the Bible. In our day this war has been renewed with great daring and activity. Great names in science have arisen to renew and press forward the combat begun ages ago by infidel Greek and Roman scientists. These modern doughty champions

of the old atomic theorists, having refurbished the old and rusty armor of their Greek and Roman masters, full panoplied in it, have defied the God of Israel, and challenged him to mortal combat. They come with no new weapons to champion the fight, for there is nothing new in theory or argument; to originality they have no claim. Like their great Greek and Roman masters, while they deny an intelligent, personal God, they advocate gods many, who have, as we have before said, all the creative power ever ascribed to the God of Israel. And though no worshipers of the Baal of Ahab and Jezebel, they worship the *Baalim*. They cannot, it is true, symbolize their gods, as Ahab and Jezebel symbolized theirs, by images which they might worship and kiss with their lips; for the gods of these modern infidel scientists are atoms infinitesimal in size and infinite in number. Hence, by no outward forms can they be guilty of idolatry; for how can an infinitesimal atom be symbolized? how can it be represented in wood, or stone, or bronze, or silver, or gold? Hence, they have erected no altars to the gods they worship; they have consecrated no high places to their service. But they are no less idolatrous. Who can worship an abstraction? Neither can any one worship a mere force, or law, or sequence. But men must have something to worship. No man has ever lived and not worshiped something. Unable to make to themselves an image of a molecule, of an atom, of protoplasm, they have deified the intellect which conceived them. As the infidel scientist recognizes no creative energy but protoplasm, and as protoplasm cannot be symbolized by such gross forms of matter as wood and stone, silver and gold, he symbolizes it by what he calls matter's subtlest form—the human intellect. As the worshipers of idols transfer to the idols themselves the attributes of the gods they serve, so do they who deify protoplasm, and symbol-

ize it by intellect, transfer to intellect the homage due to protoplasm. And as no intellect is greater than the proud infidel scientist's own, he deifies that intellect, makes it God, and imperiously demands for it universal homage. Hence, his only real supreme God is the mighty EGO. And though there be many an EGO, and therefore gods many, there is not an EGO in the temple of science who does not sit and exalt himself above every other EGO in the whole Pantheon. And there is not an EGO in the whole Pantheon who does not relegate all that do not agree with him to the *limbus fatuorum*—to the limbo of fools.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ELIJAH'S FIRST APPEARANCE TO AHAB.

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LET us now return to Elijah, and see how the prophet met the contest waged in his day against the personal God of Israel. As we have seen, he appears suddenly before the wicked and idolatrous Ahab. Whence he came, how he came, no one knows. The fiery steeds, which bore him to heaven on his departure from earth, may have caught him up in Gilead, and alighted him without, before the gate of Jezreel, or within, before Ahab's palace. Whether the king even knew that such a prophet was in existence, we are not informed. He may have thought, for all we know, that his active and vengeful queen had cut off the last one of Jehovah's prophets. However this may be, Israel's king must have been startled and dazed by the sudden and unexpected appearance of the prophet, by his sublime and heroic daring, and by the terrible calamity with which he threatened his realm. The bold Tishbite's weird and fiery look, and coarsesheep-skin mantle, and leathern girdle, and shaggy hair must have been awe-inspiring to the guilty Ahab. The accredited ambassador of the Almighty Sovereign of the universe stands proudly and defiantly before Israel's impious king. The majestic mien of the God-commissioned legate, the terrible earnestness of his heaven-inspired tones, the tremendous oaths which he uttered, and the woful sentence of the dread Judge of all the earth, which he faithfully pronounced, were all in keeping with the importance and dignity of the prophet's great embassy. By the *ever-living* Lord God Elijah swears, and not by Baal, whom Ahab worships—"a



mere power of nature," or luminary, "born, like the other luminaries, out of the primitive chaos"—but by Him who created the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and all things—sun and moon and stars; things visible and things invisible—who said, "Light be, and light was;" who spake and it was done, commanded and it stood fast. By the ever-living Lord God of *Israel!*—such, too, is Elijah's oath. Baal is not God of Israel; Jehovah alone is Israel's God. It was Jehovah who called Israel out of the heathen Ur of Chaldees. It was he who made his seed after him as the sands upon the sea-shore innumerable, and who covenanted with him, and with his seed after him, to give them the land of Canaan for a possession. It was Jehovah who kept them alive in Egypt in time of famine; who divided the Red Sea before them, and, with its returning waters, drowned the pursuing Egyptians. It was Jehovah who conducted them through the wilderness by his pillar of cloud by day and column of fire by night, smote the rock and gave them water to drink, and fed them with manna that fell down from heaven. It was Jehovah who gave to them the law amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, drove out the heathen nations before their face, and put them in possession of the promised inheritance. And it was Jehovah who raised up for them Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam, and Joshua, and Gideon, and Barak, and Deborah, and Samson, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and David, who illustrated Israel, and delivered the chosen people out of the hands of their enemies.

In the presence of this ever-living Lord God of Israel Elijah *stands!* The eyes of him who keepeth Israel, and who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, are upon him. Elijah is there present before Ahab by Jehovah's command; he speaks in Jehovah's name, and under Jehovah's protection. The Lord God of Israel, before whom he stands, hears what

he says, will bear witness to his message, and confirm the messenger. And as a proof that the Lord God of Israel ever liveth, that Elijah is his servant and speaks by his authority, the prophet swears that there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to his word. By withholding the dew and rain at the prophet's word, and by their return at the same word, the Lord God of Israel would demonstrate that he is God, and he alone; that he is not "a mere power of nature" like Ahab's god, but the *personal* God—the God of creation and providence—who giveth the dew and the rain, and the fruitful seasons, and the harvest; who begetteth the drops of dew, covereth the heavens with clouds, prepareth rain for the earth, maketh grass to grow upon the mountains, satisfieth the desolate and waste ground, and causeth the bud of the tender herb to spring forth; who giveth the snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes; who casteth forth his ice-like morsels, and sendeth out his word and melteth them; who shutteth up the sea with doors and stayeth its proud waves; who bindeth the sweet influences of the Pleiades, looseth the bands of Orion, bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guideth Arcturus with his sons; who maketh a way for the lightning of the thunder, and directeth it unto the ends of the earth; who giveth to the beast and to the young ravens their food; who openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing; and who upholdeth all things by the word of his power; by whom all things consist, and in whom all things that have breath live, and move, and have their being.

Elijah's message is delivered. Like an apparition he came, and like an apparition he vanished out of Ahab's presence. How he went, who saw his departure, no one can tell, for the record is silent. Did some invisible hand bear him away before the king—aroused from his surprise—could arrest him? Was the king so confounded by the

suddenness of the apparition, was his guilty conscience so alarmed by the prophet's denunciation, did he so quail before the searching, piercing eye of the fiery prophet, was he so dumb-stricken by Elijah's scorching words and the direful calamity which they foretold, that his pallid, trembling lips could utter no order for his arrest? Where were Ahab's courtiers, where the officers of the palace, where the guards that waited upon his royal person, that no hand was uplifted to smite the presumptuous prophet, or to clutch him and drag him to prison? If dew and rain depended upon the prophet's word, why was he not seized? why was he not hurried to the torture and made to keep back the word that should withhold them from the earth? Or, was Ahab so given up to Baal and Ashtoreth—had he such faith in their power to defend him—that he confidently relied upon the gods of Jezebel to avert the threatened vengeance of the God of Elijah? Was he such an unbeliever in the prophet's God that he had no faith in the prophet's word? or did the prophet's malediction appear to him as the wild ravings of lunacy? and was Elijah himself looked upon as a mad prophet whose predictions were no more to be respected than the idle wind? and, for that reason, was no impression made on the king's mind? and was the prophet, therefore, allowed to come and go with impunity as one irresponsible, and not to be heeded? These are questions to which the history gives no direct answer. And yet, while the record does not tell us whether the king was smitten with dumb apathy, with bewildering alarm, or with the indifference or contempt of unbelief, we are persuaded that Elijah's maledictions either so paralyzed the king with fear that he made no effort to arrest him, or that if he did attempt to apprehend him the Lord God who sent Elijah to Ahab delivered him out of Ahab's power. We could easily believe that the king was maddened by the prophet's daring, and

that his frenzy was aroused by the prophet's denunciation. From what followed it may be the monarch did attempt to seize the prophet, and that Elijah was saved by the miraculous interposition of Jehovah. That the king sought to arrest the Tishbite, that his purpose was to punish him for his temerity, may be an inference from the fact that the Lord God hurried his servant away from Ahab's presence and power, and hid him where the king's most diligent search could not find him. And hence the scene is changed from Ahab's palace in Jezreel to a cave in the rocks, hid away somewhere in a wooded mountain by the Jordan, and known only to the winged ravens, to Elijah, and to Elijah's God. And now our business, for awhile, is with Elijah in his hidden mountain retreat; meanwhile we leave the wicked and idolatrous monarch to brood in secret over the prophet's malediction, and to wait to see whether the prophet spoke by inspiration of God, and whether the threatened evil would fall upon Samaria.

## CHAPTER V.

### CHERITH.

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AFTER Elijah delivered his message, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying: "*Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.*" And to Cherith the prophet went. In that solitary wild, far away from the busy world, and "alone with nature and with nature's God," he spent at least the first eight months after his entrance upon his public prophetic work. His hiding-place was a secret in his day; nor could any one after him tell where flowed "the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan." Whether it was on the east or the west of the Jordan is still a conjecture. While some think—because he was directed to turn eastward—that it was on the east in Gilead, others suppose it was on the west. What is called the Wady Kelt, on the west of the Jordan, Dr. Robinson—from the analogy of name—suggests may have been the Cherith of Elijah. How Dr. Robinson arrived at this conjecture Dr. Kitto has shown. "The reader," says Dr. Kitto, "may be at some loss to see the analogy of Cherith and Kelt. But *r* and *l* are commutable letters, frequently exchanged for each other; and if the *l* in Kelt be changed for *r*, it becomes Kert, or, with the softer sounds of the initial and final letters, Cherith." But the eminent author above quoted—who was one of the best of Oriental scholars—did not think this sufficient "to make out the identity, as the situation of this brook [the Wady Kelt] seems less suitable for the purpose in view than many others that could be indicated."

It is not improbable that, in Elijah's day, the Cherith was not a mere wady—some ravine filled with water in the rainy season, and dry and parched by the heat and drought of summer—but a mountain stream, perennial like the Arnon and Jabbok, or like the Jordan in the valley beneath. If there be no trace of it now, it may be because its sources were forever dried up by the long drought which Elijah brought upon Samaria. Perennial streams in Palestine have had a precarious existence at best; the drought of three years and a half may have so exhausted the springs by which they were fed that more than one succumbed to its power, and forever afterward, unless when swollen by the rains, ceased to flow. At all events, where all is conjecture and no certain knowledge is left to us, it is more in keeping (and we shall so regard it) with the situation of Cherith "before the Jordan"—that is, we take it on the mountains along one of its sides, looking down upon and tributary to it—to believe it was some perennial mountain stream with rocky bottom and shaded banks. Nor is this opinion affected by the things learned travelers and explorers tell us about the present general desolations of the Holy Land. The fewness of its perennial streams, the dryness of its wadies when the winter rains are over, the barren and denuded state of its hills and mountains, and the gullies which have made deep gashes in their sides—these are all the mutations of time; and they are the result of the system of agriculture pursued in Palestine for over two thousand years, and of the curse for its sins upon a land once flowing with milk and honey. In our own Southern land—because of our pernicious agriculture—barren wastes, bare hill-sides, wide gullies, and streamless valleys may now be seen, where only fifty years ago were fields white with fleecy cotton or golden with yellow grain; hills covered with giant trees and luxuriant vines, abounding in game and woodland

fruits, and perfumed with the fragrance of sweet-scented wild flowers; noisy brooks in which the red-finned pike lorded it over the shining minnow, or the deeper creek, in which the sportsman angled for shy bream or voracious trout. If such wastes may be seen all over these Southern States of the American Union, what changes may not two thousand years have wrought in Palestine? The just wrath of God has made desolate a land which was once "a delightful land," and "as the garden of Eden;" "for he turneth rivers into a wilderness and the water-springs into dry ground, a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of those that dwell therein." In a land thus cursed "the seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid waste, the barns are broken down, for the corn is withered." The early and the latter rains have failed; the corn and wine and oil have decreased. The cutting away of the trees which once adorned the hills and mountains, and the absence of ditch and terrace, has exposed their sides to the winter torrents that sweep away the alluvial soil, where once flourished the fig-tree and the cedar, the vine and the olive. This destruction of the trees has diminished the rain-fall, and laid the land bare to the summer's heat. And besides, the rains which do fall are borne away the sooner by the deepened and widened wadies, or exhaled much faster by the unobstructed sun.

But it was not thus in the days of Elijah's fathers. For it was "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness," and in which "thou shalt not lack anything." It was a land which the Lord had cared for; his eyes were always upon it "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." What inspired prophets and psalm-

ists wrote about it, and sung about it, was not mere rhetoric or high-sounding hyperbole. And even at this day, notwithstanding its general desolations, there is in it much of loveliness and beauty, equaling all that inspired metaphor wrote or sung of the dew on Hermon, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, and the glory of Lebanon. The vast and fertile plain of Esdraelon, the vineyards of Eshcol, the olive-yards of Hebron, the gardens of Nablous, and the pastures about Bethlehem show us, at this day, what the land once was, and what it may be again, under proper tillage and a good government. In Elijah's day, there were, doubtless, many secluded spots in its hills and mountains and valleys, full of beauty and romance; cool grottoes, shaded springs, gurgling brooks, with the scent of wild flowers, the hum of bees, and the songs of birds. In some such weird spot, and not on some open, dry, and desolate wady, such as now meets the eye of the traveler in the Holy Land, we shall believe, in the absence of all evidence to the contrary, the Lord God of Israel put his servant Elijah, when he hid him from Ahab by the brook Cherith.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE RAVENS.

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THE Lord God, when he sent his prophet to dwell by "the brook Cherith, which is before Jordan," made special provision for his prophet's wants: "*And it shall be,*" said he, "*that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.*" Accordingly, as long as the prophet dwelt by Cherith, "*the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.*"

Into the controversy, touching the agents employed to supply Elijah with daily food, we purpose to enter so far as it relates to the words proposed as substitutes for the "ravens" in our Authorized Version. It is well known that the vowel-points in the Hebrew determine the word itself, and, therefore, its meaning. In the passage before us the Hebrew word is *orebim*, or *arbim*, according to the vowel-points respectively used. The *first* is the word adopted by our Authorized Version, and is translated *ravens*; by some, who admit the same reading, it is translated *merchants*; but if the *second* word be the true Hebrew reading, it should be rendered *Arabs*. Hence, while there are two different readings, there are three different renderings. Both those who contend for Arabs and those who contend for merchants, for like reasons, oppose the ravens of King James's Version. It is urged by them both that ravens could not have been the agents which fed Elijah—*first*, because ravens are legally unclean birds; *second*, being dumb brutes, no intelligible commands could be issued to them; *third*, ravens could not

have the purpose and forethought necessary to feed the prophet; *fourth*, the natural food of ravens is such as no Israelite, by the law, is permitted to touch; *fifth*, as ravens cannot carry any but very small animals, and must, therefore, tear in pieces the larger ones which they capture, Elijah could not have eaten what they thus brought, inasmuch as the law forbade the eating of animals "torn of beasts." When it is answered, by those who believe ravens to be the true reading, that they were miraculously directed to the proper food and miraculously supplied with it, it is said, in rebuttal, that this multiplies miracle on miracle, a thing God never needlessly does. To this it may be rejoined, Granted, that God never needlessly performs a miracle. Who can tell what is needlessly and what is not needlessly done? For if God perform an act, no argument that it was needless will stand, for one moment, against the fact of the doing of it. It cannot be a sure argument that it was not done; neither is it an argument that it ought not to have been done; for we are no safe judges of what it is needless or not needless for God to do. For who hath searched out his judgments? who hath found out his ways? who hath been his counselor? or who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?

That ravens fed Elijah with proper food was no greater miracle than when salt healed the waters of Jericho, or when meal neutralized the poison in the pottage, or when a stick, thrown upon the water where the borrowed ax of one of the sons of the prophets had sunk, caused the ax to swim upon its surface. And that ravens should bring suitable food to the prophet required no greater miracle, or multiplication of miracles, than for a fish to swallow a living preacher, and, after keeping him three days in his belly, vomit him forth alive and well. The salt, the meal, and the stick, so far as we can see, were just as unnecessary as

the ravens; God could have accomplished his ends by other means. In the case of the fish the marvel was in employing the fish; if the fish was employed, then all things else followed. And the marvel was in employing the ravens; if they were used, then all that followed was a necessary sequence. For the Almighty Creator, who adjusted the fish's belly to keep a man alive in it, and unharmed, surely had no more difficult task when he fed with nutritious food, by the agency of ravens, his servant Elijah. As God gives to the ravens themselves their food, and heareth their young when they cry, and feedeth them, what great miracle was required to put them in the way of food needful for his prophet?

But it is said that ravens will eat carrion. Must they, therefore, bear carrion to Elijah? Do not ravens seize also upon quail, and doves, and pigeons, and chickens, and ducks, and even upon live kids and lambs, and bear them away for subsistence, tearing in pieces only such as are too large to be borne? Is it not the well-known habit of ravens to hide their prey in holes, in caves, and in by-places, and keep it until it is ready for use? In the rocks, hard by Elijah's abode on the banks of the Cherith, they might deposit their prey where the prophet could easily find it. And thus the very habits of the birds conduced to the support of Elijah; and in nowise was there need of multiplying miracles to do it. Indeed, without miraculous interference at all, the prophet may have secured his food from ravens, and that too food not forbidden by the law of Moses. The only difficulty in the way, so far as the law is concerned, was not in the kind of animals, but in such as were "torn of beasts." And yet not even here was there any necessity for a miracle; for these birds of prey often bear away living animals without tearing them. Enough of these may have been taken to Elijah to meet all his needs.

And thus, without miracle, ravens may have borne to Elijah flesh for his morning and evening meal.

But now let the divine interposition be taken into the account. If God commanded ravens to feed the prophet, was it not easy to direct them to what must be taken, and how it must be taken? If he sent them with food direct to Elijah, would he send them with what was "torn of beasts," or with any thing not proper for food and lawful to be eaten? If he did not send them direct to him; if Elijah found out where they hid their prey, and took it from thence, did he not know what was lawful, and what was unlawful? Nor did it require many ravens to hide enough of proper flesh to feed a single man. Where game abounded, as doubtless it did abound in that wild, uninhabited mountain region, not many ravens were needed to supply Elijah's daily wants. But suppose that miracle, to a certain extent, was necessary to furnish the prophet with flesh. Can a falconer train a goshawk to swoop down upon a wood-pigeon, and, having seized it, bring it to his master; and could not the Lord God teach the ravens how to capture their prey, and how to bear it to the prophet? Has not even the eagle been domesticated, and been taught to take prey, and carry it to his master? One of the species of the royal bird has been used by the Kirgiz Tartars to capture antelopes, and even foxes and wolves. Borne along perched upon the hunter's hand, and hooded until the prey is in sight, the eagle is then unhooded, and sent in pursuit of the fleeing game. And so highly prized is one well trained that as much as the price of two camels, it is said, has been paid for a single bird.

Ornithologists tell us that the raven is easily domesticated, and that its habit of seizing prey, and many things not prey, has caused no little annoyance to the owner. The reader is reminded of what Dickens, in his preface to "Barnaby

Rudge," says about the ravens of which he was, "at different times, the proud possessor." "The first," the great novelist tells us, "was in the bloom of his youth, when he was discovered in a modest retirement in London, by a friend of mine, and given to me. He had from the first, as Sir Hugh Evans says of Ann Page, 'good gifts,' which he improved by study and attention in a most exemplary manner. He slept in a stable—generally on horseback—and so terrified a Newfoundland dog by his preternatural sagacity that he has been known, by the mere superiority of his genius, to walk off unmolested with the dog's dinner, from before his face." On the death of this one, whose life, at an early day, some "youthful indiscretion terminated," Dickens, "inconsolable for his loss," was comforted by the present of another "older and more gifted raven." "The first act of this sage," he says, "was to administer to the effects of his predecessor, by disinterring all the cheese and half-pence he had buried in the garden—a work of immense labor and research—to which he devoted all the energies of his mind. When he had achieved this task he applied himself to the acquisition of stable language, in which he soon became such an adept that he would perch outside my window and drive imaginary horses, with great skill, all day." But this one "was too bright a genius to live long." "After some three years he, too, was taken ill and died before the kitchen fire. He kept his eyes, to the last, upon the meat as it roasted, and suddenly turned over on his back with a sepulchral cry of 'Cuckoo!'"

Many things have been written about the sagacity of ravens, and confirmed by the highest authority, almost, if not quite, as marvelous as the feeding of Elijah. It has been taught to speak. Its sagacity was so well known and acknowledged that, in ancient Rome, it was regarded by the ministers of religion as the most important bird of augu-

ry. According to a Roman legend, one of the republic's most illustrious generals, Marcus Valerius Corvus, is said to have derived his cognomen from the assistance which a raven gave Valerius in a hand-to-hand fight with a gigantic Gaul. Many of the citizens of Macon, Georgia—the city in which the writer lives—could tell some wonderful and perfectly truthful things about “Jim Crow”—*Corvus Americanus* was his species—who, about two months ago from this date (July 30, 1885), put an end to his eventful life by eating too freely of some friction matches, which he had stolen and hid away. For three years this bird—a species of the raven (*corvus corax*)—was domesticated at the well-known cotton warehouse of Mr. O. G. Sparks, ex-mayor of our city. “Jim Crow” had the freedom of the warehouse, and notwithstanding his insatiable propensity to kleptomania—stealing and hiding every thing he could seize and carry off—he was welcome, wherever he went, to the warehousemen, to the employés, to the customers, and to the visitors. But Jim had his likes and his dislikes, his friends and his foes. To all, with whom he was on good terms, he was most devoted and most affectionate, coming at your slightest friendly call, perching upon the back of your chair, or hand, and submitting his head to be scratched, enjoying it immensely. But if he received the most trifling affront, no coaxing, no repentance, no gifts could win him over. Having a voracious, a truly *ravenous* appetite, he was ready to receive every thing presented to him for food, provided it was not offered by one with whom he was at variance. From such he would receive nothing, no matter how dainty or tempting the morsel. The offender could not even approach him, let his attempts at reconciliation be never so cunningly and skillfully planned. If there was one such in any company, “Jim Crow” was never off his guard for a moment. He always had an eye to the slightest movement of

the suspected person. If the latter made the least effort to advance toward him, whether the advance was one of menace or friendship, Jim, jumping down from his perch on some friendly shoulder, if he chanced to be there, or leaving the daintiest food which he might be eating, would be off in an instant, and safely out of reach. And whether his retreat was slow or rapid, it was amusing to see with what a sidling gait he would retire, always keeping upon his enemy, an eye that flashed contempt, defiance, or irreconcilable hate. These things the writer witnessed with his own eyes; their truthfulness can be attested by many eye-witnesses. And when "Jim Crow" died, his death was lamented by not a few, to whom he had been, for three years, the source of no little amusement. When the writer missed him from the warehouse, where Jim had been a frequent visitor, and learned his untimely end, he felt that he too had sustained a loss. His kind owner, we may well believe, could appreciate the feelings of the great English novelist, who was "inconsolable for his loss," when his first raven died from an overdose of the white lead which he had stolen from the painters.

But we must return to the ravens which fed Elijah. What violence is done to truth when we suggest that the prophet himself may have domesticated the ravens and trained them to do his bidding? How long would it have taken this solitary man of the mountain wild, dwelling in its caves, climbing daily its crags, and daily seen in the frequented haunts of its feathered denizens, to familiarize the ravens, who built their nests around him, to the sight of his sheep-skin mantle and shaggy hair? And if now we call in the aid of Jehovah to assist the Tishbite in domesticating the ravens and making them obedient to his will, let no believer in the miracle-working God of the Bible say that this was too small a trifle for God to do. For with

God there is nothing small that affects the man who puts his trust in him. There is more of divine providence in little things than in great. Numbering the hairs of the head is a greater proof of the divine sovereignty and power than weighing the mountains in scales, or counting the stars and calling them by their names. That not a sparrow falleth to the ground without its Creator's notice is a greater assertion of providence than keeping revolving worlds in their orbits.

Again, no more miraculous power was needed to make ravens feed Elijah than to make wandering Arabs, or traveling merchants, from some imaginary town called Oreb, feed him. Was the prophet's hiding-place in the wild and wooded mountain such a thoroughfare that Arabs, or merchants, could daily supply the prophet with flesh for his morning and evening meal, and Ahab not find it out? This would have required miracle, and miracle repeated daily. It would prove that the hiding-place of the prophet was no hiding-place at all; or it would indicate that supernatural power was daily exercised over the minds and wills of the free human agents who did the service. Such supernatural influence, if human beings were employed, was necessary to furnish the prophet with daily meat, and keep his hiding-place a secret. It was more likely that ravens could have been thus supernaturally influenced; for ravens are free and moral agents in no such sense as men are. The ravens were frequenters of the brook by which the prophet dwelt; they built their nests in the trees, or in the crevices of the rocks. It was to them a place of daily resort; it was the seat of their aeries on the mountain heights. Besides, these dumb birds could tell no tales. The prophet's hiding-place was safe with them; Ahab could never learn from them where God hid Elijah. Merchants, or Arabs, being equal sufferers with the King of Israel from the drought which the



prophet's word brought upon all the region round about, were not persons Elijah's God would be likely to trust with the secret of his hiding-place. But it has also been conjectured that the persons who fed Elijah were of the one hundred prophets, whom good Obadiah hid in a cave and rescued from Jezebel's wrath. If they were such, were they not known to Elijah? and if they were known to him, how could he truthfully say, as he believed, that he was the only prophet left in Israel, who remained faithful to Israel's God?

We can see no greater miracle, or multiplication of miracle, in providing the prophet by ravens with daily bread and flesh than in multiplying daily the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse, so long as Elijah abode beneath the humble roof of the poor widow of Zarephath. And what was the latter but miracle repeated daily, and that for over two years? Why repeat the miracle every day, when God, by a single miraculous act, could have supplied them with enough meal and oil to last a twelvemonth? At Zarephath daily bread for daily needs was Jehovah's procedure; and who will blame him for it? Who questions the miracle because it had to be daily repeated? Allow miracle for a single day, and there is no difficulty in repeating it every day in the year. And when miracle is thus repeated, who will say that it is needlessly done? The feeding of Elijah by ravens was not so great a miracle as that which supplied him with the cake baked on the coals under the juniper-tree in the wilderness. Many ways has God of providing his children with bread. Indeed, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. It was no greater miracle to feed Elijah by ravens than by the angel from heaven, who baked for him a cake on the live coals. Whence came the fire of burning coals? whence came the meal which made the cake? whose

hands kindled the fire, kneaded the dough, placed it on the coals, and then baked it for Elijah?

Again, it was no more miraculous for the ravens to understand and obey the commands of Jehovah than for a dumb ass, when Jehovah commanded, to open his mouth and speak, and rebuke the false prophet. And as it regards the uncleanness pronounced against ravens by the law—we answer, it has nothing to do with such use as God put them to, when he fed his prophet by them. Israelites, it is true, were forbidden to touch them; but in what sense? For food, and for food only. In the same sense they were forbidden to touch the horse, or the camel; and yet the horse and the camel, though forbidden food, were touched, and handled, and used as beasts of burden by the Hebrews. They might not be eaten, but they might be used to carry what it was lawful for a Hebrew to eat. God did not give the ravens to Elijah for food; but by them he sent him his daily supply. A well-trained, keen-scented spaniel is unfit for food, but he may bring to his master many a savory dish of grouse or teal. At all events we shall believe that it was lawful for Elijah to eat whatever God provided for him; nor do we believe that God, who employed the ravens, sent him by them any thing common or unclean. Here we will not multiply miracle, for it is not necessary. The ravens, without multiplying miracle on miracle, could carry enough of what was lawful and clean for the morning and evening meal of the prophet of God.

Thus have we answered the objections urged against the agency of ravens. It remains only to add a word as to the weight of authority on the question in controversy. While some great and honored names contend for "Arabs," and others for "merchants," many more, in every way their equals, if not their superiors, agree with the great scholars, to whom we are indebted for the Version of King James. And to this

weight of authority we must now add the testimony of the learned British and American scholars who have given us the Revised Version. In view of these facts, we shall continue to believe, and shall rejoice in the belief, that the great God, who heareth the ravens when they cry, and giveth them their food in due season, sent by them *flesh* for the morning and evening meal of his servant Elijah, so long as he dwelt by "the brook Cherith, which is before Jordan." Nor did the Lord God have to go to Ahab's kitchen, or to the cave where Obadiah hid the one hundred prophets, for the *bread* he sent to Elijah. The same Lord God, who sent him, by the angel, the cake baked on the coals under the juniper, sent him, by the ravens the bread which he ate on Cherith's rocky banks

NOTE.—That the daily supply of food might have been brought to Elijah without a miracle, as the author states, is verified by the following incident. It is related in the "Life of Thuanus," or, as he is generally called, De Thou. He was traveling in the mountainous regions of Navarre, in France. "When they reached Mande," says his biographer, "the bishop of the place entertained them in the most sumptuous manner for some days. They perceived that the game at the table generally wanted a wing or a leg, and sometimes the head; on inquiry they were surprised to hear that it was supplied from the nests of eagles in the neighboring cliffs. The peasants build small hovels or huts near, to screen themselves from the fury of the parent bird, which brings food for its young, and after the spoil is deposited, flies away. The peasants then hasten to remove what they find—chickens, hares, partridges, or pheasants—and throw in garbage to the eaglets; but some portion of the prey is generally devoured. Three or four nests supply an elegant table through the year, and chains are fastened around the young to prevent their flying as soon as they otherwise would. Thuanus had the curiosity to ascend to one of these nests, and was a witness of the scenes described."—BOOK EDITOR.

## CHAPTER VII

### ELIJAH AT CHERITH.

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WHEN the Lord God commanded Elijah to hide himself by the brook Cherith, *“he went, and did according to the word of the Lord; for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.”* The prophet went with implicit faith in Jehovah’s promise that the ravens would supply him with bread and flesh, and the brook with water. And, as we have seen, the word of the Lord was fulfilled; for *“the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.”*

How long Elijah remained at Cherith no one can state with accuracy; nor can we tell precisely at what time he took up his abode there. The time spent by the brook has been variously estimated from eight months to a year. It could not have been less than six months, nor longer than twelve. And as to the time of year, we can form some conjecture approximating the truth. We know he remained there until the brook dried up. *“And it came to pass, after awhile, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.”* The drought, which continued three years and six months, ceased in Elijah’s third year at Zarephath. This would allow six, or even nine months for his residence at the brook. Eight months at Cherith and thirty-four at Zarephath would make the full three years and six months’ drought, its duration according to the saying of our Lord in St. Luke, and of St. James in his Epistle. But, whatever its duration it must be reckoned from Elijah’s message

to Ahab till the fall of rain after the sacrifice on Carmel. To be reckoned fairly, it must be reckoned from the time both the dew and rain ceased at Elijah's word till he spoke the word which brought their return. If Elijah, at the beginning of the rainy season (at which time, it is probable, he went to Cherith), commanded the dew and rain to cease, no part of the previous six months of dry weather, during which the dew continued to fall, must be counted as any part of the drought; for the previous six months' absence of rain had no dependence whatever upon Elijah's word. As the absence of rain from March till October is the invariable and normal meteorological condition of Palestine, its presence during the months embraced between March and October would be phenomenal, and not its absence. But it may be said that there was no dew during those months, and that therefore they must be considered. Was the prophet's sentence retroactive? If he appeared to Ahab in autumn, and if there had been no dew during the previous summer, then the drought began six months before the prophet delivered his message to the king. Hence, they must be wrong who compute the previous summer as a portion of the drought. And hence the probability is that it began in autumn at the time the winter rains usually set in, and ended in the spring of the fourth year after Elijah's first appearance to Ahab. It began with the season for the autumnal or *early* rains of the year in which the prophet pronounced his calamitous judgment against Israel, and ceased in time for the spring or *latter* rains of the fourth year afterward.

The rainy season in Palestine begins near the end of October, or the first week in November, and continues, with but slight intermissions of fair weather, until the middle of March; sometimes ending earlier, with the last of February; rarely later, with the last of April. The first, or au-

tumnal, are called the *early*, and the second, or spring, are called the *latter* rains. The maximum of the rain-fall for a year—very nearly all of which occurs in winter—is about eighty-five inches; its minimum about forty-four; and its average about sixty. From April till November, with rare exceptions, there is an entire absence of rain. Long before the summer solstice in June till the last of October, unclouded skies and scorching suns rule the day, the great dryness and the fiery heat being relieved by the cool nights, and by the heavy dews that remind us of Gideon's fleece, on which the dew had fallen, and out of which he wrung a bowlful of water.

From the data given we approximate the time when Elijah went to Cherith. We know that while he was there "the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land;" and we know Elijah could not have remained longer than a year. The land missed the winter rains, which were won't to supply the springs and water-courses, and provide the soil with moisture against the long drought of summer. Added to this, after what was usually the dry season set in, the spring and summer dews—which are so heavy in Palestine that water may be freely wrung from cloths or skins that have been exposed to them—failed as well as the winter rains. The water-courses, which, at the end of winter, ought to have been fullest, were in early spring running low in their beds. And when the dew also ceased, it could not have been longer than June, when even perennial streams revealed channels without water. If the Cherith failed in June it allowed the Tishbite a residence of about eight months on its banks. From this we infer that Elijah went to Cherith at or about what ought to have been the beginning of the rainy season. And if this be so, he passed the winter and the spring in some solitary cave hard by. As soon as the fiery suns of summer came, Cherith, having

had neither the early nor the latter rains, nor the dews of spring to supply its sources, could no longer give drink to the prophet. Hence, God sends him elsewhere, and makes other provisions for his thirst. But before he leaves his solitary haunts by Cherith, let us conjecture how the Tishbite passed the time in his lonely retreat.

The mountain-cave by the brook may have been no new but an old haunt of the prophet. There is nothing in the history to show that Cherith was before unknown to Elijah. He may, at some time, have dwelt there during the years about which we know nothing. If it were an old dwelling-place, then what we have said respecting the ravens' familiarity with the prophet is the more probable. If it had been his retreat in other days, then all things there were familiar to his sight, and he would the better know how to adapt himself to the secluded life which he must lead. But whether an old, or a new abode, he was to dwell alone, far beyond the search of Ahab and his minions, and where no roaming Arab of the desert wild, or itinerant merchant from Oreb, could ever come.

And there are no positive data by which we may determine the prophet's age when he went from Jezreel to Cherith. That he was in the vigor of life may be inferred from the fact that, three years and a half later, he ran before Ahab's chariot from Carmel to Jezreel, and arrived first at the royal city. There is nothing in all the narrative which indicates old age to the Tishbite. At the time he entered upon his prophetic work, he must have been strong of limb and possessed of great powers of endurance. If the prophet's youth and early manhood were spent in Gilead, he was, doubtless, inured to the life of its hardy mountaineers. Like those highlanders east of the Jordan, with swift feet and unwearied limbs, he could chase the fallow-deer and the chamois; scale the mountain-crag where the eagle fixed,

his aerie; pursue the wild boar to his lair in the denser woods; or, with dauntless courage, beard the panther and the lion in their dens. His raiment and food were as simple as the raiment and food of Gilead's mountaineers; the sheep of its pastures on its hill-sides and in its valleys, or the wild beasts of the wilderness, furnished him with skins for his clothing; the bees gave him honey from hives in the cliffs of the rocks; the olive, the fig, and the vine supplied him with fruit; his meat was flesh of kids and lambs, of the wild roe, of the turtle-dove and the wood-pigeon, the partridge and the quail. His bread was of barley or wheaten flour, baked on the coals or roasted in the ashes; and, perhaps, his only medicine was Gilead's healing, aromatic balm. Whether the prophet had any certain dwelling in Gilead for a home, we know not; but whether he had or not, as with its tough and sinewy mountaineers, it made no difference whether his couch was the bare ground, with only the starry heavens or some umbrageous tree for his canopy, or in some mountain-cave, strewed with dried leaves from the wild woods, over which was thrown the skin of shaggy bear or tawny lion, with his sheep-skin mantle as a pillow for his head. And it is quite probable that, in his former life, his days in Gilead were chiefly spent among the flocks and herds of his pastoral and nomadic kinsmen. In boyhood he may have attended his father's flocks, driving them out to green pastures by the oleanders and willows on the margin of the Arnon; protecting them from beasts of prey; following the stray ewe that wandered from the fold, and, having found it, bearing it back upon his shoulders; or guiding, with his shepherd's crook, the doubtful feet of the timid through dark valleys, dangerous mountain-passes, or narrow defiles.

We could wish also we knew something about Elijah's early life; we wish we could tell who were his parents, and



who were his brothers and sisters, if any he had. But we cannot. It is fair, however, to presume that he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," and that both his Hebrew parents were devout and pious, thoroughly indoctrinated in the religion of their fathers, imbued with its spirit, and true worshippers of the God of Israel. It is also fair to suppose that Elijah, at the appointed age and according to the law, was consecrated by the rite of circumcision to the service of covenant-keeping Jehovah. His pious parents, no doubt, early taught him the past history of his race and God's dealings with them from the call of Abraham to the dedication of the temple on Mount Zion. And he was, no doubt, early instructed in the outward and inward meaning of the Decalogue given to his people amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, and graven by the finger of Jehovah upon tables of stone. It was then, perhaps, that the heart of the young Hebrew boy was fired with zeal for the honor of the Lord God of Israel, and with hatred of those who had impiously introduced idols and idol-worship into the land consecrated and set apart to the worship of the one only living and true God. And perhaps at a very early age—it may be as early as the call of Samuel in the house of the Lord at Shiloh—God called him to be his prophet and the reformer of the idolatrous nation. It may be that at an early day God took him from the flocks and herds and hid him away from men, and alone in the mountains, among the birds and beasts, and trees and flowers, and rocks of the wild woods, trained him for his service, and for the special work to which he called and devoted him. And that he might be the better prepared for it, after a long tutelage in the wilderness, God may have sent him, before his showing forth to Israel as his chosen prophet, to visit the regions west of Gilead—from the Jordan to the Mediterranean, and from snow-capped Lebanon on the

north to sunny Paran on the south. Unknown and unobserved till his appearing to Ahab, the future prophet of God and reformer of Israel may have gone from place to place in a land which was "an epitome of the natural features of all regions—mountainous and desert, northern and tropical, maritime and inland, pastoral, arable, and volcanic"—with "the tropical fauna of many distinct regions and zones brought into such close juxtaposition" that "even the southern slopes of the Himalayas afford no greater variety and beauty." That the worship of the Lord God of Israel who had given this goodly land to his fathers should be forsaken, and his altars thrown down, and that the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth should be the worship of Ahab and of his court and people, stirred the fiery prophet's zeal, and made him burn to begin the work of denunciation and reform. Gladly he obeyed the summons which sent him to Ahab. With reluctance, we believe, but with implicit acquiescence in the Divine command, he went to his life of seclusion and inactivity by Cherith, there to await the result of the drought which was to come upon sinful and idolatrous Israel.

The Tishbite is alone in some cave by the brook, and yet he is not alone: God is with him, and the prophet enjoys his conscious presence. The Lord God, who afterward sent his angel to him under the juniper-tree to prepare food for him that he might have strength for the long journey to Horeb, did not let his servant lead a lonely and recluse life for nearly a year in the mountains without intercourse with him. The angel of the covenant who appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, to Hagar in the wilderness, to Jacob at Bethel, to Moses at the burning bush, to Gideon under the oak at Ophrah, to Manoah in the field of Zarah, to Samuel at Shiloh, and to David in the threshing-place of Araunah, surely did not forget Elijah at Che-

rith. Celestial visitants, we may well believe, honored him with their presence, comforted him by their sweet ministries, and conversed with him about his prophetic mission. In no school of the prophets was Elijah trained; he attended upon no prophet as his master who instructed him in the prophetic art. His sole instructor and trainer for his appointed work was the Lord God of Israel who sent him to Ahab and afterward to his hiding-place by the brook. Elijah was no anchorite like the solitary in the rocks of Enghedi, who withdrew himself from the world to avoid its temptations, and to seek holiness in the wilderness by self-denial and penance and self-inflicted scourges. For the Tishbite was in solitude by the command of God; and by God's command he remained there till God ordered him to exchange his abode by Cherith for the dwelling of the widow of Zarephath. And to no fastings, to no mortifications of the flesh, was Elijah subjected. The morning and evening meal of flesh and bread was daily supplied, and without stint his thirst was quenched by the brook. Nor do we think it was at all probable that, while he dwelt by Cherith, he was shut up in some mountain cave as in a prison. Wherever it was, God took care that his prophet's haunt should be unknown and inaccessible to Ahab. At that day there were doubtless many secluded, hidden, and out-of-the-way places in the mountains by "the brook that is before Jordan" where God could secrete his prophet without shutting him up in a cave, or grotto, and, lest his hiding-place should be discovered, closely confining him there. It was no difficult matter, nor did it require any miracle, to keep the place of his concealment unknown to Ahab, and to let his prophet, with perfect safety to himself, have the freedom of the trackless woods in which his hiding-place was fixed. Hence, he may have passed his time sleeping in the cave by night, and by day roaming as he

might please the thick woods which sheltered his retreat. And while his general dependence for food was upon the ravens, there is no reason why he may not have supplemented his table with whatever of fruit or game he might himself obtain. Nor was this a difficult thing for him to do, if his early life as a mountaineer of Gilead had been as we have reasonably supposed. In the absence of any positive proof to the contrary, we may innocently conjecture whatever may not be inconsistent with Elijah's life and character, or with the plans of God in sending him to and hiding him at the brook. Sure we are that Elijah's God would indulge his prophet in what was consistent with his safety and health. And as this could be done by giving his servant the liberty we have suggested, we do not think his God refused it to him.

Day after day and night after night came and went for nearly a twelvemonth. The winter days, which had ever been marked in Palestine by frequent and excessive rains, were as dry as the driest summer. If the sky was ever overcast, it was with "clouds without water;" for God commanded "the clouds that they rain no rain." If the lightnings lighted up the heavens in the south or south-west—which, in the valley of the Jordan, had always been the sure token of approaching rain—he that "causeth the vapor to ascend from the ends of the earth," and "maketh lightnings for the rain," kept back both the rain and the vapor. Loud thunders may have thundered in quarters, which had been the sure harbingers of abundant showers; they may have rolled along Cherith, and reverberated among the caverns and crags of its mountains; but no showers followed their deafening voices. But it may be that these mocking signs were withheld; that no clouds obscured, no lightnings flashed athwart the heavens, and "from crag to crag leaped" no thunders. Already, before

Elijah left Cherith, the heavens above were by day as solid, burnished brass; no part of blazing noon, "insufferably bright," was ever overspread by even fleecy or gossamer veil; and the fiery sun shot down his rays through no obscuring media. And by night, in their turn, the moon, with no soft and mellow but with glaring and bewildering light, and stars, whose faintest rays shone like Sirius when he rises and sets with the sun, held undisputed sway. The drought having followed hard upon the long and fierce heat of summer, the ground was baked and parched, and no moisture was found on leaf of bush or tree, or on blade of grass, and scarcely did any green thing relieve the eye. As the water in the wadies had long been exhaled by the burning sun, and had received no supply from the winter's rains, they were as dry through the autumn and winter as they had been left at the close of summer. Perennial Cherith, meanwhile, through the long and dry winter, supplied with water not only Elijah, but the beasts of the forest and the birds of the air; and thither they came to drink. But Cherith—perennial stream though it had been—unreplenished by the rains of autumn and winter, was feeling the drain upon its waters. Day by day the brook was narrowing its banks, and growing shallower in its bed; and when the fierce suns of the opening summer poured their unobstructed rays upon its sources and all along its windings, it ceased to be a running stream, showed here and there a stagnant pool, and soon disappeared altogether.

Meanwhile, without misgiving, and with child-like faith in God and his promises, Elijah was passing his days and nights at Cherith. With unfailing regularity the ravens brought him bread and flesh; with good digestion, with a heart full of love, and with gratitude to the bountiful Giver of all good, he ate his morning and evening meal. Incense of praise and thanksgiving continually ascended heaven-

ward from his rustic abode. In fellowship with God, and having the abiding testimony of the Divine approval, his hours glided sweetly by. In the solitudes of the wilderness he had daily communings with nature. To him its works were no "universal blank," nor were they to him "expunged and razed." No "thick drop serene" quenched, or "dim suffusion veiled," his orbs. He saw nature with his eyes, and he saw God in nature, and traced his works "in fairest lines." To him the heavens declared the glory of God, the firmament showed his handiwork, day unto day uttered speech, and night unto night showed knowledge. The sun by day and the moon and stars by night proclaimed their great Creator's praise. The "sweet approach of even or morn" was saluted with fresh incense from a loving heart. The days were spent in patient waiting on the will of God, or in such duties as could be performed in his solitary retreat. The nights were passed in refreshing sleep, in communing on his leafy couch with God and his own heart, or in thoughts concerning the past and present history of his race—the faith of Abraham, the deliverance of Moses, the courage of Joshua, the faith of Caleb, the might of Samson, the heroism of Gideon, the inflexible will of Jephthah, the piety of Samuel, the lyric inspiration of David, and the glory of Solomon; or the sin of Achan, the rebellion of Korah, the wickedness of the sons of Eli, the idolatry of Jeroboam, the Baalism of Ahab, and the then prevailing idolatries of Israel. Mingled with these thoughts would be reflections on the work of reform to which God had called him, and its probable effects upon the reigning king, upon his court and people, and upon the whole future of the Hebrew race and the Church of God. The prophet's sleepless hours by night were no doubt occupied by many such thoughts, interrupted only while listening to the murmurs of the pebbly brook without, the sighing of the winds

through the trees and caverns of the mountain, the croaking of ravens, the laughing of owls, or the melodious song of "the wakeful bird" that

Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid  
Tunes her nocturnal note.

But the hour has come when the prophet must leave his abode by Cherith. The brook has dried up, and can no longer give him water. That the ravens fed Elijah, and not Arabs, or merchants, is confirmed by the fact that he depended for water upon the brook alone. If Arabs, or merchants, supplied him with bread and flesh, they might have brought him water after the failure of the brook, and there would have been no necessity for the prophet to change his abode. That water could have been had from somewhere, notwithstanding the dryness of Cherith, is evident from the fact that the people were kept alive during the drought of three years and a half. Some may have perished from thirst, but the great body of the people survived. Wherefore, as the ravens could supply Elijah with flesh and bread, but not with water, the prophet, when Cherith failed, was sent where he could be furnished with both food and drink. And from Cherith he was sent to Zarephath.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ZAREPHATH.

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THE scene shifts from "the brook, that is before Jordan," to a maritime town of Phenicia. When the brook Cherith could no longer supply Elijah with water, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying: "*Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*"

When the Tishbite left the Cherith, he left the lairs of wild beasts—the lion, the panther, the bear, the jackal, the wild-boar, the fox, and the wolf; the haunts of the roe, the chamois, the antelope, and the wild-goat; and the nests of eagles, falcons, kites, vultures, ravens, owls, bustards, partridges, quails, doves, cuckoos, and nightingales. For all these were of the fauna of Palestine, and, in the prophet's day, frequented the mountains on either side of the Jordan. Under the protection of the Lord God of Israel he lived secure from beasts of prey. Ravens, as we have seen, were his ministers; and, no doubt, all the other animals, the harmless and the harmful, became familiar to his person, under the watch and ward of Him who, when it pleaseth him, maketh the wolf to dwell with the lamb, the leopard to lie down with the kid, and the lion and the calf and the fatling together, and a little child to lead them. As long as it was the will of God for him to continue there, the prophet remained by Cherith with cheerful submission, with unquestioning faith, and without a misgiving, even when he saw the water growing daily less and less in the brook. And when ordered to leave Cherith, he bade farewell, with ready obedience and unwavering faith, to the



brook which had given him drink; to the friendly cave which had sheltered his head; to the mountains which had been the appointed bounds of his retreat, with their trees, and shrubbery, and vines, and flowers, and dells, and rocks, and crags; to the ravens which brought him his morning and evening meal; and to the quadrupedal and winged fauna, which, besides himself, were the only denizens of Cherith's sequestered environs.

Child of want and sorrow, who perchance readeth these lines, pause a moment to ask whether your faith in God and his promises is such as was the Tishbite's in the solitudes by the brook. Not unfrequently, to test their faith, God sends his children to some lonely, out-of-the-way place—to some Cherith apart. It may not be literally as was the "Cherith, that is before Jordan," but none the less real. For oft, even in crowded and wealthy cities, God's poor and afflicted saints, dependent upon his ravens for their daily bread, may be dwelling as much alone and apart as in some uninhabited wilderness. How is your faith when the water is getting low in the brook? and how is it with you when you must leave it and the friendly ravens, and go to some unfriendly Zarephath? Fear not, child of heaven! take no thought for the morrow. Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. He who sustained you by the brook will lead you, when it fails, where "your wants shall be his care."

Solitary and secret was Elijah's journey from Cherith to Zarephath. Nearly the whole of the direct way from the valley of the Jordan to the Phenician shore of the great sea, which had to be traversed on foot, lay through much frequented and thickly populated regions. If he went by the direct route, the inhabitants of much of the way were the idolatrous subjects of Ahab; the inhabitants of the rest of the route were either the idolatrous sub-

jects of Ethbaal, King of Sidon and father of Jezebel, or of some other Phenician power. The subjects of Ahab were anxious to apprehend the Tishbite and drag him before their king; the others were equally ready to seize him, because they too were experiencing the blighting effects of the drought. Besides, both Samaria and Phenicia were explored by the officers of Ahab and the detectives of Jezebel, who, in search of Elijah, had scoured every known nook and corner from beyond Jordan to the Mediterranean, and from Lebanon to the borders of Judah. These were urged on by hatred of the prophet, the fear of Ahab and Jezebel, or the hope of meriting their favor, and winning the reward promised to him who should carry the prophet alive to Jezreel or Samaria. For it is not to be supposed that a price was put upon Elijah's head. Ahab was long convinced that the drought had been brought on by Elijah's word, and that it could be removed by nothing but the same word. To take the Tishbite's life before he spoke the word would prolong the drought. Hence, the only hope of its removal lay in the apprehension of the prophet, and coaxing or forcing him to speak the word that should bring back the dew and rain. Through such dangers Elijah must make his way to his newly appointed abode. But we know not by what route he journeyed. Whether Cherith was on the east, in Gilead—or on the west, in Samaria—if he went by the direct route from either, he had to cross the great and inhabited plain of Esdraelon, and, turning to the north and the north-west, go by Carmel and Tyre, and so on to Zarephath. If he did this, to have traveled unobserved he must have journeyed by night, and remained concealed by day. But to avoid exposure, it is probable the prophet went by the less dangerous route, on the east of the Jordan, going northward as far as Damascus; and, taking the road to Zidon, crossed Antilibanus and Libanus, passed Zidon, and arrived at his desti-

nation. This was the longest way, but, for the prophet, the safest. But whatever the route, and however he journeyed, God brought his servant safely to Zarephath.

This Phenician town was situated on the Mediterranean about midway between Tyre and Sidon. As Tyre and Sidon were nearly twenty English miles apart, Zarephath was about ten miles from either, being a little nearer to the latter than to the former. The Zarephath of the Old Testament is the Sarepta of the New, and the Sarafend of modern times. Zarephath is the Hebrew, and Sarepta is the Greek for the name of the town; Sarafend is its Turkish designation. While this ancient town is chiefly celebrated in the sacred history as the dwelling-place of the prophet Elijah for nearly three years, it was not without importance otherwise. Its relation to the rest of Phenicia, and to the religion of the Phenicians which Ahab and Jezebel were seeking to establish in Israel, must be considered in estimating its bearing upon the life of the Tishbite.

The ancient Phenicia was one of the oldest and most celebrated countries of antiquity. Its people were descended from Canaan, a son of Ham; and, Philistia excepted, it occupied the whole of Canaan between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. But whatever its extent before the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, the Phenicia of Elijah's time was a narrow strip between Libanus and the Mediterranean, extending from spurs of Libanus on the north to Mount Carmel on the south. This territory, at the division of Canaan among the twelve tribes, was assigned to Asher, but was never completely subjugated by the Asherites. Phenicia, when Elijah went to Zarephath, was a succession of maritime towns on the coast of the great sea. These are the towns mentioned in Judges, from which Asher did not drive out the inhabitants: "*But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they*

*did not drive them out.*" Beginning near Carmel, and going north, we have on the coast, and in their order: Accho, afterward known as Ptolemais, but still later, in the times of the Crusades, as the St. Jean D'Acre of the famous siege conducted by Richard Cœur de Lion; Achzib (ten miles north of Accho), the Ecdippa of the Greeks and the Zib of the present day; Tyre (Tzor, in Hebrew), called in Joshua "the strong city," and now known as Sur; Zarephath (Sarepta, in Greek), and the modern Sarafend; and Zidon (Sidon, in Greek), which derived its name from Canaan's eldest son, and was called in Joshua "the great Zidon." Saida is the present name of Zidon. Tyre and Sidon were the greatest of these cities, but there were others of inferior names along the Phenician coast.

The Phenicians—or Canaanites, as they are generally designated in the Hebrew Scriptures, except when they are called Zidonians, from Zidon, their oldest colony—were closely related to the Hebrews. Their language, as may be learned from their coins and inscriptions, and from those which have come down to us from the colonies they established in Africa and Europe, was Shemitic, though they themselves were immediately descended from Ham. No literature of ancient Phenicia is extant; and yet it is concluded from their coins and inscriptions that their language was neither Shemitic Arabic nor Shemitic Aramaic, but Shemitic Hebrew. It seems to be the commonly received opinion of Oriental philologists that the old Phenician and the old Hebrew are not different tongues, but different dialects of essentially the same language. But though no literature of Phenicia has come down to us in books, yet the Phenicians must have had a literature. This we arrive at not only from their coins and inscriptions, but from the fact that the Greeks were indebted to the Phenicians for letters. We may regard the whole story of Cadmus as a poetic or

mythical legend, and still there remains enough of truth to make it highly probable that a Phœnician colony carried letters to the Greeks.

But, however this may be, there is no doubt that, at a very early day, the Phœnicians were advanced in civilization, proficient in certain arts, and pioneers in commerce. In the days of David, King of Israel, Hiram, King of Tyre, sent cedar trees to Jerusalem, and cunning workmen, who built David a house. King Solomon, when he would build a house for the Lord God of Israel, applied to the Tyrians for help, saying he had none among his own people who "can skill to hew timber like unto the Zidonians." And he "sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre," who was "*a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali; and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to King Solomon, and wrought all his work.*" The whole elaborate work of the temple was cunningly wrought by this Tyrian craftsman—its brazen pillars, and chapiters, and nets of checker-work, and chain-work, and pomegranates, and lily-work, and molten sea, and knops, and oxen, and baths, and bases, and borders, and ledges, and lions, and cherubims, and wheels, and undersetters, and palm-trees, and lavers, and shovels; with its altar of gold, and tables of gold, and candlesticks of gold, and its golden oracles, and lamps, and tongs, and snuffers, and basons, and spoons, and censers, and hinges for the doors. Ezekiel speaks "of the multitude of wares of Tyrian making"—"emeralds, purple, and brodered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate." The commerce of Tyre was unrivaled; its skill in ship-building was unequalled. It boasted, according to Ezekiel, that its ships were made of boards of fir-trees of Senir, whose masts were cedars of Lebanon; whose oars were of oaks of Bashan; whose benches were of ivory brought out of the

isles of Chittim; whose sails were of fine linen with broidered work from Egypt; whose coverings were blue and purple, whose mariners were of Zidon and Arvard; whose pilots were wise men, and whose calkers were ancient and wise men of Gebal. Tyrian sailors traversed almost every sea; Tyrian colonists were found on almost every shore. Cyprus, Utica, Carthage, Rhodes, Crete, Thrace, Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain had their Tyrian colonists. Tyrian navigators, starting from the Red Sea on a voyage of discovery, sailed around Africa, and, after an absence of two years, returned by the way of the Pillars of Hercules. "Situated at the entry of the sea." Tyre was "a merchant of the people for many isles." Isaiah calls it "the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth." Distant Ophir, though the voyage required an absence of three years, was explored for its gold; the Britannic Isle was visited for its tin; Spain furnished silver and iron and lead; Javan, Tubal, and Mesech, between the Caspian and Euxine, provided copper, wheat and oil and honey and balm came from Palestine; the Bedouin Arabs supplied rams and lambs and goats; Egypt yielded linen; Dedan, on the Persian Gulf, ivory and ebony; Damascus, wine; and the Peloponnesus, the shell-fish, from which the Tyrians made their dyes. The greatest of kings sought to be arrayed in purple of Tyre. Syria, and Persia, and Egypt, and almost all parts of the then known world, lavished their most precious things upon this great Phenician city by the sea.

Nor was Zidon scarcely less illustrious. In the days of the Judges, as we have seen, it was "the great city," while Tyre was "the strong city." Indeed, the comparative greatness of the two cities repeatedly fluctuated. Because they were under independent and separate governments, when one suffered from siege, or capture, the other profited by

the calamity of the sufferer. Hence, more than once, while Tyre was in decay Sidon flourished, and all the more, because her commerce and manufactures were relieved of the powerful competition of her sister and neighboring city.

Nor were the other cities of the Phœnician coast without their influence and importance. They, too, were once flourishing and wealthy commercial and manufacturing centers, and were only overshadowed by the two larger and more wealthy cities. Accho, or Ptolemais—the St. Jean D’Acre of the Crusades—was not only a city of ancient greatness, but, in the Macedonian period, was the most important Phœnician town upon the coast. Fragments of buildings, and walls, and columns, and slabs, extending more than a mile, attest the former greatness of Zarephath. It was no insignificant town in which the widow woman resided who sheltered Elijah. Its inhabitants were Phœnician merchants, ship-owners, and manufacturers. The glass of Zarephath was no less famous than the glass of Zidon. The whole Phœnician coast was alive with trade from below Accho on the south to beyond Arvard on the north; for the commercial, manufacturing, and maritime cities were almost contiguous. “The numerous towns which were crowded together in the narrow space of Phœnicia,” so Kitto puts it from Heeren’s “Commerce and Politics of the Ancients,” “covered almost the entire coast, and, together with their harbors and fleets, must have presented an aspect which has scarcely ever been equaled, and which was calculated to impress every stranger on his arrival with the ideas of wealth, power, and enterprise.”

The narrow slip which embraced the Phœnician cities was bounded on the west by the Mediterranean, and on the east by the mountain-range of Lebanon. Its length was hardly more than thirty miles; the width of the plain between the

sea and the mountains was, at Sidon, not more than two miles, and, at Tyre, not more than five. At some points Lebanon so encroached upon the sea that there was no plain between. The whole intervening space was of great natural fertility, and was greatly enriched by culture, and by a wealthy and crowded population. It was a vast and rich garden, exceedingly well watered by the numerous springs that ran down the sides of Lebanon. Nor has it lost all of its ancient fertility and productiveness. At this day Western Asia has no more productive valley. "It produces," says an eminent Oriental traveler and scholar, "wheat, rye, and barley, and, besides the more ordinary fruits, also apricots, peaches, pomegranates, almonds, citrons, oranges, figs, dates, sugar-cane, and grapes which furnish an excellent wine. In addition to these products it yields cotton, silk, and tobacco. The country is also adorned by the variegated flowers of the oleander and cactus. The higher regions are distinguished from the bare mountains of Palestine by being covered with oaks, pines, cypress-trees, acacias, and tamarisks; and, above all, by majestic cedars, of which there are still a very few old trees whose stems measure from thirty to forty feet in circumference. The inhabitants of Sur still carry on a profitable traffic with the produce of Mount Lebanon, namely, wood and charcoal. Phenicia produces also flocks of sheep and goats, and innumerable swarms of bees supply excellent honey. In the forests there are bears, wolves, panthers, and jackals. The sea furnishes great quantities of fish, so that Sidon, the most ancient among the Phœnician towns, derived its name from fishing."

Ancient Phœnicia exercised no small influence upon the world's religion. Wherever Phœnician mariners or merchants or colonists went, they carried their religion and their country's gods. What that religion was, and who



were the gods of the Zidonians, we have already passed under review. It was not to be expected that a people who had such an extensive and controlling influence over the commerce of the world would have no influence upon its religion; for religious ideas are very easily conveyed through channels of trade. Let the people of one country control another's commerce, and they will have readiest access to those whose commerce they direct. Hence trade, in all ages, has been an important and influential factor in determining and shaping the moral and religious ideas.

Ancient Corinth, by means of her two ports—Lechæum, on the Ionian, and Cenchreæ, on the Ægean—having become the emporium of trade between Europe and Asia, held greater sway over morals and religion than the more cultured, æsthetic, and religious Athens. Her luxurious and licentious worship had a much wider range than the religion of Socrates and Plato, not only because it everywhere found a more congenial soil, but because her commerce gave to it far readier access to human hearts. An equally great but happier influence is felt when trade is controlled by correct moral and religious opinions. This is one great reason why the influence of Christian England has been much greater than that of infidel France. Woe to the world, if Britannia had not ruled the waves! Woe to the world, if French merchants had controlled her great marts of commerce! And while estimating the agency of Christian England in these regards, consider the comparative difficulties which she would have to surmount. The more liquid tongue, the lighter literature, the politer manners, and the looser moral and religious ideas of France, if French commerce had been more extensive and controlling, would have boasted a dominion more universal than England's, and one far more easily acquired.

If commerce be governed by right principles, if its stand-

ard be high, it will be a persuasive exponent of right moral and religious truth. But if its standard be low, if cunning and fraud mark its procedure, if selfishness and gain at whatever price be its supreme object, it will be a potential disseminator of bad morals and a depraved religion. Corrupt itself, it will surely defile those who are brought under its power. And there is no mere human power more potent for good or evil than the money power; and nowhere does money have such a subtle power as in trade. Let a wealthy commercial people of superior intelligence be the masters of another's markets, and their influence will be supreme. And let intelligent commercial wealth be backed by greater strength, let its battalions be the best trained and disciplined, let its swords be the longest and the keenest, let all its offensive and defensive weapons be the best, and its authority will be absolute. If the principles be corrupt, the influence will be corrupting. "Evil communications corrupt good manners;" and nowhere are such communications conveyed more readily than through the avenues of commerce. And when evil communications, thus conveyed, succeed in corrupting the heart, the intellect is ready to embrace the moral and religious as well as the commercial ideas of those who did the corrupting. Success, in such case, has a twofold influence. Neither party is left where they were when the commercial intimacy began. The injury done is reciprocal. For even the corrupter becomes still more corrupt, and "shall utterly perish in his own corruption." And of this the ancient commercial centers are striking examples. Read the woes pronounced against mystic and apocalyptic Babylon for the debasing effects of her merchandise upon herself, upon the merchants, and upon all who had ships in the sea, and were made "rich by reason of her costliness!" The sins of great Babylon, who exalted herself, and "lived deliciously;"

who defiled the nations "through the abundance of her delicacies," and, in turn, became more defiled herself, reached unto heaven and called for vengeance. God remembered her iniquities; and his angel, proclaiming her doom, cried mightily with a loud voice, saying: "BABYLON THE GREAT IS FALLEN, IS FALLEN!" Hear the woes denounced against the Assyrian Babylon, that was "the glory of kingdoms," and "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency!" Babylon, that made all the earth drunken with the wine of her "golden cup," is "as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah!" Tyre and Sidon fell under like prophetic denunciations, and for like reasons. Their riches were made a spoil; their merchandise became a prey; their walls were broken down, and their pleasant houses destroyed; their stone, their timber, and their dust were laid in the midst of the water; the noise of their songs ceased, and the sound of their harps was heard no more.

The influence of the trade of Phenicia upon Judah and Israel was most pernicious. Commanded to take its cities, and to destroy its wicked and idolatrous inhabitants, the Hebrews not only failed to do as they were ordered, but formed alliances with the Phenicians, and entered into close commercial relations with them. "*Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.*" What Ezekiel thus said of Tyre was true of all Phenicia. The land of Israel became its granary, and received in exchange Tyrian purple, and many costly delicacies. Demoralized by this traffic with the Phenician cities, and the intimacy which resulted from it, the Israelites were the more ready to imbibe Phenician ideas. Evil communications with the idolatrous Zidonians corrupted the plain and simple manners of the Hebrews. The renunciation of the Monotheism

of their fathers and the adoption of the Baalism of the Phenicians easily followed, and the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth was the necessary sequence. The old religion was regarded as exclusive, unsociable, and gloomy; the Baalism of the Zidonians was comprehensive, companionable, and genial. The worship of the sun, moon, and planets, which the religion of Phenicia commended, even if it were "the most beautiful and perhaps the most natural form of idolatry ever presented to the human imagination," was defiled by obscenest rites. When once, therefore, the Baalism of Phenicia found a lodgment in the Hebrew heart and mind, the impurities of its worship attached to the worship of the Hebrews. And thus was Israel defiled and debased by intimate commercial relations with the Zidonians. This demoralization, the nuptial alliance of the King of Israel with the wicked and idolatrous Phenician princess, and the frequent forbidden intermarriages between the sons and daughters of the Israelites with their Zidonian neighbors, greatly accelerated and fearfully increased. Nor has the evil influence of this commercial intercourse with Tyre and Sidon disappeared to this day. Idolatrous worship, as we have seen, ceased soon after the captivity, and the name of Baal was no more mentioned in Israel. But the Hebrew mind was so captivated by the successful commerce of the Phenicians, and the vast wealth and untold luxuries which it brought and accumulated, that to get gain by trading became its absorbing and dominant passion. Hence to this day the descendants of Judah and Benjamin, who, equally with Israel, traded with Phenicia, and through Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, and Ahaz and Manasseh were at times infected with its Baalism, are a race of merchants, traders, and bankers. Though they are no worshipers of Baal and Ashtoreth, though no symbolizing idols of wood or stone or brass or silver or gold are fashioned by their

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hands and kissed with their lips, yet as a race are they the  
intensest worshipers of

Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell  
From heaven, for even in heaven his looks and thoughts  
Were always downward bent, admiring more  
The richest of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,  
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed  
In vision beatific.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ELIJAH GOES TO ZAREPHATH.

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STRANGE seems the providence which sent Elijah to a place wholly given up to the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. Why was he not sent to the rival kingdom of Judah, where there were many true worshipers of Jehovah? *"In the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah, began Ahab, the son of Omri, to reign over Israel."* As Asa reigned forty and one years Ahab, at Asa's death, was in the fourth year of his reign. If Elijah appeared to Ahab before Asa died, he would have had nothing to fear from the King of Judah; for "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days." But if the prophet did not appear to Ahab in the days of Asa, then it must have been in the reign of Jehoshaphat, his son and successor. And if so, the Tishbite had nothing to fear from Jehoshaphat, for he *"walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord."* Not until after Ahab was slain at Ramoth-gilead; not until after Jehovah's fiery steeds bore Elijah to heaven; not until after Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers did Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and wife of Jehoram, King of Judah, introduce into her husband's kingdom the Baalism of her father and mother. Hence the prophet had nothing to apprehend from Baalism there. But it may be said that Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab made Judah an unsafe place for Elijah. But this alliance was not effected until years after the prophet's flight to Zarephath; for the first part of Jehoshaphat's reign was occupied in building

fortresses, and otherwise strengthening his kingdom against the kingdom of Israel. And, besides, we know that Elijah, nearly three years after he went to Zarephath, just after the contest on Carmel and the flight from Jezreel, did pass through Judah to Beersheba. Hence it does seem strange that when God commanded the Tishbite to leave Cherith he did not order him to Judah. And stranger is it that he ordered him to an idolatrous town, in the closest alliance with Ahab, and in the center, in the very heart of Baalism. Certain we may be, if the then King of Judah—whether Asa or Jehoshaphat—was in alliance with Ahab, it was not such an alliance as would have allowed either of those pious kings, whose hearts were perfect with the Lord all their days, or who did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, to deliver a prophet of Jehovah into the hands of an idolatrous worshiper of Baal. Assured, therefore, are we that the danger of Elijah's apprehension, if he should be discovered, was far greater in idolatrous and unfriendly Phenicia than in the pious and friendly kingdom of Judah.

Why, then, was Elijah sent to Zarephath? It would surely seem easier for Elijah to have found a hiding-place in Judah than in a Phenician town. For there was no greater thoroughfare than the narrow plain of Phenice. In all the country west of the Jordan there was no equal space half so crowded. And if the prophet *must* go where Baal was supreme, why not hide him in some dark and densely shaded cave of contiguous Lebanon? Why not command its ravens to feed him? why not give him water to drink from its unfailing springs, fed by the perpetual snows which crown its summits? why put him in a house, in the narrow plain on the sea-shore, by which thousands were continually passing and repassing? why fix his abode where hundreds of Ahab's subjects—many more than could have been found anywhere in Judah—must have been coming and going

every day? From whence did Israel draw its supplies during the long drought which parched the fields of Samaria? Why send him to Phenicia, which, if not suffering equally with Samaria from the drought, was cut off by Elijah from its granary in Palestine? The Phenician cities, no longer able to supply themselves with bread from Palestine—whence they had been accustomed to get it—must procure it elsewhere, not only for themselves, but for their suffering neighbors in Israel. The ships of Tyre, and Sidon, and Zarephath, and Achzib, and Accho must bring it from Egypt, from Cyprus, from Utica, and from wherever they could find a granary. And when thus brought to these sea-port towns, Ahab's servants must transport it overland to Jezree! and Samaria. And why, above all, in a time of great scarcity, when many must have perished from famine, command a poor widow woman to shelter and sustain the prophet? Why not send him to the good and pious King Asa, if he was alive? or to the equally good and pious King Jehoshaphat, if Asa was dead, with the charge to feed and defend him? For the Lord God, by his prophets, did have communications with those pious kings, and make known to them his will. But if he could not trust his servant with the then King of Judah, were there no prophets there, and no pious worshipers, to whose care Elijah could safely be committed? If the good Obadiah, in Samaria, could hide a hundred by fifties in a cave, and feed them all, was there not some Obadiah in Judah who could hide and feed a single one of the Lord's prophets? If Elijah could be securely housed and sustained in unfriendly Zarephath—and that too by a poor widow woman, whose only food was just enough meal and oil for a single cake—was there no friendly house in Judah to give him shelter, and no friendly widow to divide with him her barrel and cruse? Yes, there were many safe hiding-places in Judah.



Most gladly the good King Asa or the good King Jehoshaphat would have received and protected the Lord's fugitive prophet. In the service of either there were those high at court who, if their king were unwilling, would have risked their all for the Lord's great prophet of Israel. And many a widowed daughter of Judah would have esteemed it a blessed privilege to have had him under her roof. But the Lord God had his own way of providing for his servant Elijah. O Lord God of Israel, again we ask, who hath searched out thy judgments? who hath found out thy ways? who hath been thy counselor? who hath known thy mind that he may instruct thee? Our best answer to the question, Why did God send Elijah to the widow woman at Zarephath? is: "*Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.*" And this to us is an answer all-sufficient. It was best as it was; and so it has always been, is now, and ever shall be, with every thing which our Father in heaven commands or does. We would not have had it otherwise; and sure we are that Elijah would not have had it different. It was best for the saints of God in Elijah's day, and for all who came after him, and it was best for Elijah. Sure we are that Elijah thought so then, and sure we are such was his judgment when the horses of fire and the chariot of fire bore him aloft, and when, on "the mountain apart," many years afterward, he witnessed the transfiguration of the Lord's anointed Prophet, Priest, and King.

But while the best answer—faith's last and truest analysis—is as above, yet faith is not without certain specific replies, perfectly satisfactory to itself, and full of sweetest and divinest comfort. The precious example which Elijah's faith has given is of itself enough, and more than enough, to satisfy every true believer in covenant-keeping Jehovah. Elijah's God is our God. He who fed Elijah by the ravens, who feedeth the ravens themselves, and who mul-

tiplied the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse, will feed all them that put their trust in him. Away, then, with all anxious thought about the morrow! Away with such questions as, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Having first sought and found the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things—food, drink, raiment—shall be added unto us. Elijah's God, who is ours also, is the same to-day, yesterday, and forever. He is faithful that hath promised. And to the believer in his only-begotten Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, "*all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen.*"

When the word of the Lord came unto Elijah ordering him to Zarephath, "*he arose and went to Zarephath.*" We will not conjecture the Tishbite's thoughts as he was drawing nigh to the town, which, for some time, was to be his abode. Such speculations may be harmless, but they profit little, seeing that they vary with every imagination which conceives them. Much of what we have read of Elijah in books has been the mere imaginings of those who have attempted to write his life and delineate his character, and from these imaginings many lessons have been drawn. The lessons may be true in themselves, but the speculations cannot all be true. Many of them are false, because they are inconsistent and contradictory. Many things, indeed, have been ascribed to Elijah which he never thought. If we understand the Tishbite, he was always a man of unwavering faith, of implicit obedience, and of never-failing courage. These never fluctuated; they never failed him. He had his weaknesses, and in due time we expect to show what they were. But he was never wanting in faith, or obedience, or courage. No, not even when, after the contest on Carmel, he fled from Jezebel. The doubts and fears, the disobedience and cowardice, which have been attributed

to Elijah had no existence but in the imaginations of those who misunderstood and, therefore, misrepresented him. But we must not anticipate.

We have no idea that Elijah, at Cherith, when the water in the brook began to fail, had a single misgiving. All the questionings and doubts and fears imputed to him by fancy had no place in Elijah's mind and heart. His faith was as firm as the rocks of the mountains of Gilead. The Tishbite had no thought for the morrow. All comfort to the timid, drawn from Elijah's doubts and fears, and his final victory over them, is altogether misplaced and unfounded; for he had no doubts; he had no fears. He who was fed day by day with the bread and flesh which the ravens brought to him *knew* that if Cherith failed his supply of water was sure. Timid, doubting child of God, troubled about the morrow, and anxiously inquiring, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" draw no comfort to yourself because Elijah was troubled by like questioning doubts and fears, for he had none. But take to yourself, as you may, solid comfort from the fact that the Tishbite's faith never wavered. He was a man of like passions with yourself—that is, he was human as you are human, he was flesh and blood as you are flesh and blood, and he was no more an angel than you are; and yet he was strong in faith, as you may be; and he had no anxious thought about the morrow, as, through grace, it may be with you. O thou of little faith! draw a lesson from the firmness of his faith; none from its weakness. What if the brook, which now gives you drink, be failing? what if its waters are diminishing daily before your eyes? what if the bare rock is here and there appearing? what if all that is left is some little pool that will itself soon be exhaled by the fiery sun? what if you are commanded to leave God's ravens that now supply you with food? what

if you are ordered to go where the prospect for support is apparently more unpromising than where you now are? What of all this? Child of heaven, your Father's word never faileth. When God commands, obey. Arise, and go to Zarephath! What if it belongeth to Zidon? what if the place to which you are sent is in a strange country? in a wicked and idolatrous land? what if the person to whom you are sent, and upon whom you are to depend for daily bread, is a poor widow woman? what if you do not know her? Tarry not, child of God; question not. "*When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*" The Lord will provide. The barrel of meal shall not waste; the cruse of oil shall not fail. Thou who art an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, be encouraged by the experience of Israel's sweetest singer:

"I have been young, and now am old;  
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,  
Nor his seed begging *their* bread."

Nor was the psalmist alone in this blessed experience. An eminent servant of God, who lived nearly three thousand years after the thirty-seventh Psalm was written, wrote this comment in his own old age on David's experience: "I believe this to be literally true in all cases. I am now gray-headed myself, I have traveled in different countries, and have had many opportunities of seeing and conversing with religious people in all situations in life, and I have not, to my knowledge, seen an instance to the contrary. I have seen no *righteous man forsaken*, nor any *children* of the righteous begging bread. God puts this honor upon all that fear him; and thus careful is he of *them* and of their *posterity*." And to this the writer, who has lived nearly his threescore years, would add his own testimony. Not that we have not seen the righteous, and his seed after him, in great straits, and reduced to poverty and want; not

that King David and Dr. Adam Clarke never saw the righteous or his children in need; but not one have we seen *forsaken*, or *begging bread*; for God sent to them his ravens, and supplied their wants. He raised up friends for them who were to them such as were the ravens and the widow woman of Zarephath to his servant Elijah.

It was enough for the prophet to know that God commanded him to go to Zarephath, and had directed a widow woman there to sustain him. He was not concerned about the ways and means; he left all to God who commanded and promised. He had received his orders; he knew where to go. It did not concern him that he might have to pass through countries filled with men in search of him. He had no fears because he was going to a land of idolaters who would be glad to lay violent hands upon him, and hurry him to the king at Jezreel. He had no doubts because he had to depend for his daily bread upon a poor widow woman. Be not anxious for Elijah; he is not anxious for himself. He goes knowing that the very hairs of his shaggy head are all numbered. He threads his way, by whatever route he takes, confident that no minion of Ahab or Jezebel shall apprehend him. He journeys under the assured protection of his God. He has minute directions for the way; if he has none, his hand is in God's hand, and God is leading him. Nor is there any danger of his making a mistake, and going to the wrong house. There is but one dwelling in Zarephath to which he is going, and there is no possible likelihood of his missing it. There is but one widow woman in the Phenician town to whom he is directed, and there is not the slightest chance of his meeting with another. If not already told how to find her; if she has not already been described to him by "the word of the Lord," there is no doubt he will know all that ought to be known,

and at the right time. Wherefore we need not speculate as to how much was revealed to Elijah before he left Cherith, or what was disclosed to him by the way. We need not trouble ourselves about any of these matters. God is leading his servant, and he will lead him right, and all this Elijah knows. But whether God leads or God points out the way, Elijah is going straight to the right place, and it shall be with him as God hath promised. Child of God, would you learn a lesson, and derive comfort from this part of Elijah's life? Go forward where God commands, as Elijah went, and you will go without a fear, without a doubt, and with implicit confidence, and with absolute assurance that it shall be with you as God hath said.

The Tishbite has arrived at his journey's end. Before him is Zarephath. He has come to the gate of the city. And behold, *the* widow woman was there "gathering of sticks." It was, indeed, *the* widow woman. It was not a widow woman, but *the* widow woman—the very one to whom Elijah was directed. And Elijah knew her. This was the widow woman who was commanded to sustain him. There could be no doubt about her identity. She was without the gate "gathering of sticks"—such as were lying about, and as it was lawful for the poor to pick up. The scene suggests many a poor woman in the streets of crowded cities, or in their suburbs, doing the same thing. Unable to buy fuel; too poor to purchase the smallest load of wood the countryman brings to market; shivering and poorly clad, on some cold and freezing winter's day, may be seen the poor "gathering of sticks" to make an humble loaf out of meal almost, if not quite, as low in the barrel as in the barrel of the widow of Zarephath, and to keep themselves and little ones from freezing and starving. O ye, who are daintily fed, and warmly clad, and sit, without a care, by a blazing fire of anthracite in the grate, while the sleet patters against the

window-panes, and the cold blasts howl through the streets, and the mercury sinks low in the thermometer, have you no feeling for the half-starved and ill-clad children of poverty and toil? Perhaps while the winter's storm is raging without, and you sit thus within beneath frescoed ceiling, with slippered feet, in easy-chair, and on velvet carpet, you may be reading some imaginary tale of want that brings the unwonted tear to the eye, and causes you to feel its woes. You lie down at night on downy bed, sleep undisturbed, arise in the morning, eat a sumptuous breakfast, put on your overshoes and warm great-coat, and then, with silken umbrella overhead, go to your counting-room, or accustomed place of business. On the way you pass, it may be, some hovel of the wretched poor. No coal-house filled with anthracite from the mine; no wood-house piled up with dried wood from the forest, sawed the right length and ready for use; and no pantry stored with necessaries and dainties, are there. But within are pale, ragged, hunger-pinched little ones, hovering over a few embers left from the sticks gathered by the mother the evening before, and eating the last stale morsels doled by unwilling hands. On a couch of straw, with scanty covering, lies that mother sick with a fever, or stricken with pneumonia, brought on by exposure while "gathering of sticks" to make the fire, the last spark of which is almost gone out. Through the cracks and openings of the old, leaky, and weather-beaten sheeling, the cold north wind—the storm not yet over—is shrieking, benumbing the weak and tired limbs of the sufferer on her lonely couch. And as you pass by the door, does it turn grating upon its rusty hinges? and does some one of those little ones, who knows you well—your luxury and wealth—meet you with upturned face, and with importuning plea for help? Do you turn away from this child of want and sorrow, pleading so eloquently for her grief

smitten mother, and for that mother's fatherless children, her own suffering brothers and sisters? Where is the sympathy of last evening, which, in your luxurious home, you felt while reading some imaginary tale of just such suffering as this, told in some novel by some gifted son or daughter of genius? Where is the tear, which, for a moment, came unbidden to your eye? Has the cold north wind of covetousness already so congealed it that no sun of benevolence shall ever be warm enough to thaw it? Where is the promise to remember the poor? Did not this very family, whose extreme poverty you well knew, whose appeals to your liberality you had often rejected, or dismissed with a miserable pittance, come up before you upbraidingly, accusing conscience of covetous neglect? and was not this the family which, on last night, you promised yourself to help liberally, and on this very day? Where are your kindly feelings? where is your sentimentalism? where are your good resolutions? where are your promises? Are all forgotten? or, if remembered, do you send away the eloquent little pleader with reluctant dime, or with a "*Be ye warmed and filled,*" and not give "*those things which are needful for the body?*" Away with such giving! away with such sympathy! The sympathy which weeps over imaginary suffering, and which gives stintedly and grudgingly to the real, is no sympathy at all. It is a travesty on all true human sympathy—much more on the divine. It is nothing but leaves; it is the tree without fruit, or, if it have fruit, it is fruit that is untimely cast, and never ripens. Scarcely more deserving is such sympathy than his—which is none at all—whose bowels of compassion are as frozen as snows on highest Alpine peak. "*Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*"—"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord;" and,



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*“Blessed is he that considereth the poor.”* God bless the man whose bowels of compassion are moved toward, and whose hands are swift to aid, the poor out in the cold north wind “gathering of sticks!”

## CHAPTER X.

### THE WIDOW WOMAN.

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AND when Elijah came to the gate of the city and saw the widow woman "gathering of sticks," he called to her, and said: "*Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go, and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went, and did according to the saying of Elijah; and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.*"

This artless narrative, so charming in its simplicity, we have given just as our English Version, in language of picturesque beauty, has told it to us. It is so vivid, so realistic, that the prophet of God and the widow woman of Zarephath are before us as distinctly as if their images were impressed upon these visual orbs. We see the Tishbite as he draws near the gate of the Phenician city. Having passed by Sidon, if he made the journey by Damascus, or by Tyre,

if he came through the plain of Esdraelon, he arrived at the city "that belongeth to Zidon." Before him are the dark blue waters of the Mediterranean; behind him are the tall cedars of Lebanon. On the sea-shore, between the sea and the mountain, in the narrow and fertile plain of Phenice—now as parched by the long drought as the region whence he came, or any part of the country through which he journeyed—is the Zidonian city in which resides the widow woman upon whom he must rely for shelter and food. The hairy man before us, of sheep-skin mantle and with leathern girdle about his loins, is indeed "*Elijah the Tishbite.*" By these tokens we know him; by the same tokens King Ahaziah afterward knew him, when the messengers, whom he sent to the god of Ekron, returned and told him what manner of man he was who met them by the way. Thirsty, hungry, and wearied by his long journey from Cherith, he calls to the woman whom he meets at the gate. Elijah knows that the woman before him is the woman to whom he is sent; and the woman knew who called to her and said, "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." For not only was Elijah directed to the woman, but the woman was directed to Elijah. Enough was divinely revealed to both. God did not leave them without sure evidences of mutual recognition. But he may not have made them so plain that the full knowledge of their relations should be instant and complete. For God only reveals enough of the way to make the journey one of faith, and not of sight. If the way ahead needs more light to direct our feet, the needed light is given, if our steps as far as we have gone have been ordered by the Lord. God will reveal enough to obedient faith to light up sufficiently ahead the road by which he has commanded us to go. The following fitly illustrates what we have been saying—we tell it as it is told: "A

little boy was walking with his father through a piece of woods at night; and they were lighted on their way by the glimmer of a lantern. The boy who was carrying the lantern complained to his father that the light shone but a short distance ahead; and he requested his father to turn back, because he could not see the way better. His father told him to proceed as far as he could see the way, and the light would continue to shine in advance of him." Blessed be God, the light always shines "in advance" far enough ahead to make us see that the way is safe and the footing sure!

How much light God gave to the widow woman we do not know. But we do know that it was enough, if followed, to make all his commands plain and easy. When Elijah asked her to fetch him water, the woman, acting on the light she had, "*was going to fetch it.*" But how came she to be at the gate just at the moment that Elijah was drawing nigh? Faith has the true and ready answer: God had arranged it all. And how came she to obey the stranger so readily and willingly? God had told her the signs by which she might know his prophet: "He is a hairy man; he has upon his shoulders a sheep-skin mantle; a leathern girdle is about his loins; you will meet him at the gate while you are gathering of sticks; he will say to you, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. I have commanded him, while he is in Zarephath, to abide under thy roof; and I command thee to sustain him." Thus much, we may infer, was said to her. By these tokens she knew that the prophet, of whose coming she had been foretold, was come to Zarephath. She had evidence to convince her that the prophet whom she was to entertain was at its gate; and she *was* convinced. Hence, when Elijah asked her to fetch him a little water, she questioned not, she delayed not; she hastened to bring it; she was on her

way—she was going—to fetch it. But her faith has its trial, and she must now enter upon it. God has commanded her “to sustain” his prophet; but he has not told her how it is to be done. Her extremity—what means she had “to sustain” Elijah—is known to us; for we know the whole inventory of her larder. We know that all she has of any thing to eat is just enough meal in an earthen jar—*barrel*, in our Authorized Version—and just enough oil in a bottle—*cruse*, in the same Version—to make a single cake for herself and son. And we are persuaded she has not the smallest Phenician coin, or coin of any sort, wherewith to replenish the jar and bottle when that cake is baked and eaten. Besides, too, we remember that corn and oil, and all the necessaries of life, are at famine prices in Phenicia. Samaria, as we have seen, was its granary; but now the narrow strip between Lebanon and the Mediterranean, occupied by numerous and populous cities, nearly all of whose inhabitants are consumers and non-producers, must supply not only itself with bread, but Samaria and all neighboring countries affected by the drought. What, therefore, was the surprise of the widow when the prophet arrests her as “she was going to fetch” him water, calling to her, and saying, “Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand!” This was too much for the woman. Water she could spare; but bread she had none. The little meal she had was not yet bread; she was even then out “gathering of sticks” to make it bread. And that little was her all. She was about to cook, she believed, the last cake herself and son would ever eat. And when that was gone, she and her son had nothing to do but to die. Widow of Zarephath, be not cast down! What is lacking to strengthen the faith that is in thee will soon be supplied. Your present great extremity is God’s gracious opportunity. There is a way “to sustain” the prophet of God as God has commanded

thee. How it can be done will soon be made plain; and when it is done, it will bring life and health and blessing to thee and thine. And in after years, when Shiloh—the Hope of Israel and the Desire of nations—is come, he will thus commemorate his Father's great blessing to thee: "*But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*"

When Elijah called to the woman, and asked her for bread, she must have been well-nigh dismayed. It is fair to presume that certain thoughts—which we shall presently suggest—were present to her mind. But before we state them, we will say, and once for all, that we will suggest nothing, either here or elsewhere, concerning this woman, or Elijah, or any one else, which we do not believe warranted by the facts. We shall attribute no thoughts to any one for the mere sake of pointing a moral or drawing lessons from them, however true or useful the moral and lessons in themselves may be. Several able works on Elijah which we have read are filled and profusely adorned with beautiful morals and instructive lessons founded on thoughts ascribed to Elijah, which Elijah never had, unless he had been fickle and disobedient, doubting and cowardly. All along in the life of the Tishbite—at Cherith, at Zarephath, on Carmel, at Jezreel, at Beersheba, under the juniper-tree, and at Horeb—many conflicting and contradictory things have been said of him. Many doubts and fears, and weaknesses and temptations, and weights and besetments poor Elijah is supposed to have had, that some lesson may be drawn therefrom for the admonition and comfort of some weak, timid, or erring brother. Give to the brother all the admonition and comfort he needs; but let the lesson

be drawn from Elijah's faith, courage, strength. For there was not one of the Old Testament saints more eminent in all these regards than Elijah the Tishbite. But the writers of the books to which we allude may answer, "We have often supposed that Elijah had such and such thoughts—not that he actually had them—that we might say a word in season to those who do have them, and are troubled thereby." To such we reply: This is the very thing to which we are objecting. We ask, What is your conception of Elijah's true character? If you have conceived it, and have a definite idea of it, then let every thing you say of him, let every thought you ascribe to him, be consistent with that conception. Otherwise, the Elijah you paint in words will be as incongruous as the picture Horace condemns in the first lines of his epistle to the Pisos. By proper contrasts you may say all you wish to say, and far more truthfully and justly. For there are characters, both in the Old and in the New Testament, that will furnish apposite illustrations sufficient for your purpose. But we have said enough for the present. We alluded to this once before, and may have occasion to refer to it again. What we wrote before, and what we write now, has been written to prepare the reader beforehand, that he may not be taken by surprise when certain things are written at another time and place.

But to return. We were about to suggest certain thoughts we apprehend were present to the woman's mind when the Tishbite asked for bread. "God, it is true," she might say, "has commanded me to sustain his prophet, and the man who has just now asked me for bread is he. I have no doubt about his identity; I cannot be mistaken. I see the sheepskin mantle and the leathern girdle; the man, too, has shaggy hair; he is a hairy man; he has asked me to fetch him a little water in a vessel that he may drink; and

I have met him at the gate while gathering of sticks. It is as the Lord has told me. But the man asks me for bread, and I have none; neither has the Lord told his handmaiden how to sustain his prophet. I thought the Lord who commanded me to sustain him would surely put me in the way of doing it, but he has not." Reasoning thus with herself, as we may well infer, she accordingly answered Elijah, and said: "*As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.*"

Seldom, perhaps, has extremity appeared greater. Her all was just enough to make a cake for herself and son; and when that was eaten her whole larder was exhausted. When the barrel was scraped of the last dust of meal, when the cruse was drained of the last drop of oil, she saw neither the probability nor the possibility of obtaining any more. To eat the last cake, and then die, was all she saw before herself and son; and yet this last cake the man of God asks for himself. Will she dress it for him? will she give her last morsel to the prophet? Mark, she has not denied him; she only tells him the truth. He asks for bread; there is none to give. But there is a little meal, and there is a little oil; and she had just succeeded in finding two sticks. With them she was going to kindle a fire that she might bake a little cake on the coals. But what says the prophet when the widow tells him her deep poverty and distress? "*Fear not,*" is the prophet's answer; "*go, and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.*" What a request! She has only enough for a single cake. The prophet knows it, and yet he asks for that; and she is asked to give it to a stranger, and he a strong and able-bodied man. When has means ever seemed more inade-



quate? Was ever request more seemingly cold and selfish? But had not the Lord God commanded her "to sustain" this very stranger? Yes: for he told Elijah, when he ordered him to Zarephath, that such was his command to the widow woman there. The Lord had not revealed to her how this was to be done. But Elijah, who now fully comprehends the woman's extremity, instantly comes to her relief, and strengthens her faith. "*Fear not,*" he says, "*to make me a little cake first; there is enough for me and for thee and thy son.*" For the Lord God of Israel, who commanded thee to sustain me"—so, in effect, the prophet tells her—"has authorized me to say, *The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.*" It is enough. The woman's faith has received the strengthening it needed. She has heard the promise of God by the mouth of his prophet, and from that moment believes it will be to her and her son and to the prophet according to the Lord's promise. Wherefore, without hesitation, without a moment's questioning, she, who was going to fetch water to the prophet that he might drink, hurries home to make him the cake also. For "*she went*"—no doubt taking the prophet along with her to her lowly dwelling—"and did according to the saying of Elijah; and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."

One cannot fail to observe the extraordinary faith of this widow woman of Zarephath. It was perhaps only surpassed by that of the Syrophenician woman in the Gospels. And it is something remarkable that both women were of the same country—both belonged to "the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." The woman of the Gospels was a Canaanitish woman, descended from the heathen Canaanites who peo-

pled the plain of Phenice. But it has been a question to what race the woman of Zarephath belonged. The common opinion seems to be that she too was a Canaanite, and had been a heathen worshiper of the gods of the Zidonians. But we are inclined to believe she was a daughter of Abraham, and a true worshiper of the God of Israel. It is well known, as has been noticed, that what was known as Phenicia in Elijah's day had been assigned by lot to Asher, and that many of his descendants dwelt along its plain. And, as we have also seen, the Asherites, instead of driving out the Canaanites as they had been commanded, lived among them and intermarried with them. If not a full Hebrew, it is more than likely that the widow woman of Zarephath had Hebrew blood in her veins, and was brought up in the religion of the Hebrews. Hiram, of Tyre, the cunning workman who wrought the curious and elaborate work of Solomon's Temple, had a man of Tyre for his father and a Jewish woman for his mother. Something like that may have been true of the widow woman of Zarephath; and if true, it was less strange that God ordered her to sustain his prophet. But if not a Hebrew, or descended from parents one of whom was a Hebrew—if she was a heathen, and descended from heathens—it is the more remarkable that God sent Elijah to her, and her faith is the greater marvel. If not equal to the faith of the Syrophenician woman of the New Testament, the faith of the widow woman of Zarephath deserves a place next to that of her who went to Jesus of Nazareth to have him cast the devil out of her daughter. And if they were both Canaanitish and heathen women, then the one furnishes the most extraordinary example of faith in the Old Testament Scriptures, and the other the most extraordinary in the New. The Master showed his appreciation of the faith of the woman of Syrophenicia by the unparalleled and severe tests

to which he put it, and by the answer, "*O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*" And he showed the very high estimate he placed upon the faith of her of Zarephath when he said, Though there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elias, unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto the widow woman of Sarepta.

But let us look at this saying of our Lord a little more closely. And that we may have it before us, let us give it again: "*But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*" Many widows were in Israel, but unto none of them—Israel's widows—was Elias sent, save unto the widow woman of Sarepta. Is not this widow woman called by our Lord a widow in Israel? And were not these widows in Israel Hebrews? The widow woman of Zarephath was one of them; and therefore she was a Jewess, though living in a Phenician city. Sarepta was not in Israel; but the Master said this woman was a widow in Israel—that is, she was a Hebrew. And this, it seems to us, settles the question. It proves that she was a daughter of Abraham, residing, in the days of Elijah, in "a city that belongeth to Zidon." But whether an Asherite and born in Phenicia, or whether of some other tribe and born in Samaria she had moved to Phenicia, we do not know. But we know enough to believe that she was a Hebrew, and brought up in the religion of the Hebrews. Nor was she an idolatrous Hebrew widow, but a true worshiper of the God of Israel, who had not bowed the knee to Baal or kissed his image. But did not this woman say to Elijah, "As the Lord thy God liveth," etc.? and does not this imply that the Lord God was Elijah's God, but not the God of the woman?

We do not see that this proves any thing; for one saint, addressing another, may not inappropriately say the same. When Moses, speaking to the children of Israel, said, "*He is thy God that hath done for thee great and terrible things,*" etc., was God their God and not the God of Moses? When David, in the sixty-eighth Psalm, said of the princes of Judah, etc., "*Thy God hath commanded thy strength,*" etc., was not God the God of David also? And when "the Spirit came upon Amasai," and he said, "*Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse; peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee,*" etc., was God David's God and not Amasai's? And when good Obadiah, who "feared the Lord greatly," and hid the one hundred prophets from Jezebel's wrath, said to Elijah, "*As the Lord thy God liveth,*" etc.—the identical oath of the woman—was Obadiah an idolatrous heathen? Wherefore, the use of "thy God" proves nothing. The widow woman twice called Elijah "man of God"—an address that might be more appropriately relied upon to show that she believed in but one supreme personal God, and that Elijah was his servant. But neither, by itself, is an argument of any weight. If legitimate, the latter has greater weight than the former. But however this may be, we shall continue to believe that the widow woman was a Hebrew believer, and not a heathen Gentile. And while, in this view, her faith may not appear as extraordinary as it would had she been a heathen and a worshiper of Baal; yet it was a most marvelous and most precious example of the power of faith. Her faith is still a precious legacy, which has come down to us from Old Testament times; and it shines more and more brightly through the ages. And wherever the law and the Gospels are proclaimed throughout the world the widow woman of Zarephath, down to the last of time, will be mentioned along with

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the woman of Syrophenicia, and the widow who cast in her whole living into the treasury of the Lord, and the woman who broke the alabaster-box and poured the ointment on the head of her Redeemer:

## CHAPTER XI.

### LIFE AT ZAREPHATH.

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FOR over two years and a half Elijah abode under the humble roof of the widow of Zarephath. One may be curious to know how he spent his time during his long sojourn there. Beyond the society of the widow and her son, he was as secluded as in the cave on the banks of the Cherith. Less alone, perhaps, was he in the mountain wilds before Jordan than in the busy Phenician city on the Mediterranean. A stranger in London, even though he has the freedom of the great city, and is permitted to come and go as he pleases, is never so alone as when he walks the crowded thoroughfares, and visits the frequented resorts of that metropolis of the world. Shut him up in the Tower, or in the old Bailey, or confine him to a room in a hotel, or in some private dwelling, where he can see the eager crowds coming and going, but with which he is not permitted to mingle, and he will experience a sense of loneliness greater than that of Alexander Selkirk on the island of Juan Fernandez. The larger the crowds and the busier the life which he sees without, the more lonely he will be within. For some such reason Elijah was more alone at Zarephath than at Cherith; as in a prison he lived for nearly three years. No one knew he was there save the widow and her boy. By them alone was he seen, and with them alone must he hold converse. But while his Phenician dwelling was as much a secret as his abode in the mountain-cave, it is fair to presume he could look out upon the bustling world around while no eye was permitted to look in upon his re-

treat. Situated midway between Tyre and Sidon, where the plain, with Lebanon on the east and the Mediterranean on the west, is only a mile in width, Zarephath was on the road connecting those two great maritime Phœnician cities. Besides those who traded directly with Zerephath by land and sea, the prophet could behold multitudes carrying their wares to Tyre and Sidon, and returning laden with the costly merchandise received in exchange. There he could see caravans from Syria bringing fine linen, and coral, and agate; from Togarmah, leading horses and mules; from Dedan, bearing horns of ivory and ebony; from Judah and Israel, carrying honey and balm; from Damascus, the wine of Helbon, and white wool; from Kedar, lambs, and rams, and goats; and from Sheba and Raamah, spices, and precious stones, and gold. Merchants from Egypt, from Cyprus, from Crete, from Sardinia, from the Balearic Isles, from the Peloponnesus, from Hispania, from the shores of the Caspian, and even from distant Indus, were to be seen in the open fairs, or on the streets, or passing along the coast-road to Tyre and Sidon. The Mediterranean was whitened with the sails of ships of Zarephath, inward or outward bound, or of those from its sister maritime towns; and the songs of the rowers, in cadence with the sweep of their oaken oars of Bashan, borne over the dark blue waters, fell upon the ears of the secluded prophet. Here, along the quays, the noisy sailors were loading and unloading various wares of the Phœnician export and import trade. Not unfrequently armed men—the Persian, Lydian, or Lycian mercenaries, whom the Phœnician towns employed in their armies—tramped by Elijah's abode. To him the noises of the artificers in iron, in brass, in tin, in silver, and in gold were no uncommon sounds. Elijah heard the hammers of the ship-carpenters and calkers along the shore, and the blows of the axmen and hewers of wood resounding among

the cedars of Lebanon; and he saw the smoke ascending from the furnaces of the glass-factories of Zarephath. And what was an especial abomination to the prophet of Israel's God, his eyes must have often beheld the priests of Baal and Ashtoreth, clad in the splendid vestments of their priestly office, and leading victims garlanded for the sacrifice, marching in solemn pomp and in imposing procession to the altars and temples of those false Phenician gods.

But the secluded life of the prophet within was not without its compensations. His life, though inactive, was none the less consecrated to God, and spent in his service. For he was there at Zarephath, as at Cherith, by the will of God. Nor did he serve God less at Zarephath than formerly at Jezreel, and afterward on Mount Carmel. Patient waiting upon God in the order of his providence, or express commands, is as acceptable service as the most active employment. Indeed, greater grace is required to wait and suffer than to do and dare. God only asks that we be found faithful, whether the work which he gives us to do demands patient waiting or active labor. The measure of his demands is always proportioned to our gifts and opportunities. Who does not recall, as illustrating this thought, Milton's exquisite sonnet on his own blindness?

*Doth God exact day-labor, light denied,  
I fondly ask? But Patience, to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best  
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state  
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
They also serve who only stand and wait.*

Elijah's tarrying at Cherith and at Zarephath was as necessary to him as Joseph's prison life in Egypt, and Moses's residence in Midian, and Ezekiel's sojourn by the Chebar were necessary to them. Cherith and Zarephath



were schools in which God trained Elijah for the great contest on Carmel. The man who, in solitude, patiently waited Jehovah's will for three years and a half—who, during those long years, was engaged in meditation, in prayer, and in contemplation of his works in creation, providence, and grace, and was in daily communion and fellowship with him—was being daily trained and strengthened for Carmel's fiery day.

But the prophet's seclusion at Zarephath differs in important respects from his seclusion at Cherith. At Cherith Elijah was without any human society; at Zarephath he abode under the same roof with the widow and her son. At Cherith, Elijah was fed by ravens; there we saw

the ravens with their horny beaks

Food to Elijah bringing even and morn,

Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought,

at Zarephath, the widow woman prepared his morning and evening meal. Day by day she made ready a cake for the prophet, and a cake for herself and son. Day by day the barrel was scraped and the cruse was drained; and yet day by day an invisible hand replenished that barrel and that cruse, putting into them each day just as much as was taken out the day before. And so the meal never wasted, and the oil never failed.

But let us look in upon this family circle at Zarephath. The bold Tishbite, the rugged Gileadite, the stern prophet of God, was as gentle and tender and kind as he was bold and rugged and stern. A heart full of sympathy beat beneath that shaggy breast; bowels of compassion stirred under that sheep-skin mantle. In what sweet ministries, and in what delightful converse the secluded life of the inmates of the widow's dwelling at Zarephath was spent! The morning, noon, and evening sacrifice smoked daily on the family altar, and as a sweet-smelling savor ascended heav-

enward. Moses and the law till Samuel were read and expounded by the prophet of God. The triumphant odes of Miriam and Deborah, and the Messianic psalms of David, were rehearsed, or sung with voices in harmony with their exultant numbers. They would speak of the Shiloh which was to come, and talk of the future glory of the virgin daughter of Israel who should give birth to the Messias. All this, and much more, we may reasonably infer was a daily and nightly service, if the widow woman was indeed a Hebrew and a worshiper of the God of Israel. Nor can we suppose much less if she was a devout heathen anxiously inquiring the way of salvation, and a teachable inquirer at the feet of God's anointed prophet.

And what shall we say of the intercourse between the Tishbite and the widow's son? The age of the boy is not told us; but we may correctly infer, from what was said of him when he was taken sick and died, he was of tender years. For when the breath left his body the Tishbite "*took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.*" He was yet in childhood, and at an age when the young mind is most easily acted upon by influences from without. We may well imagine the closest and most endearing intimacy between him and the prophet. The boy's innocent prattle and guileless ways, no doubt, deeply interested Elijah, and helped to beguile the tedium of his long confinement. It is pleasant to picture him climbing the knees, and running his tiny fingers through the shaggy hair of the Tishbite. And we are certain it was the delight of the man of God to watch the buddings of his boyish mind, and early impress it with the thoughts of God and religion. Such of God's dealings with the children of Israel as could be made plain to his youthful understanding the prophet would not fail to rehearse and explain. The whole story of Joseph, from his

boyhood in Hebron till he was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt; of Moses, from the bulrushes till Jehovah buried him in Moab, before Beth-peor; and of Samuel, from his birth till his burial at Ramah, would be often told. The prophet would not forget to tell the wonders which the Lord God wrought in Egypt before Pharaoh—the passage of the Red Sea, the water which flowed from the smitten rock, the manna which rained down from heaven, and the column of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, which rested upon the tabernacle through all the journeyings of the Israelites in the wilderness till it was pitched in the plains of Moab, over against Jericho. Time enough the prophet of God had to tell the listening boy of Israel's heroes and mighty men of war—of Joshua, of Caleb, of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah, and of David—“*who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, . . . escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*” The prophet could not then, it is true, tell the boy how the saints “quenched the violence of fire,” or how “women received their dead raised to life again.” For the three Hebrew captives had not yet been delivered from the “burning fiery furnace” in the plain of Dura; nor had any one been raised from the dead. But these are things we can tell to our children. Little did the prophet and the widow woman and her boy then know that themselves would soon give birth to the saying, “*Women received their dead raised to life again,*” and enable all who came after them to add it to faith's great triumphs. For Elijah was the first to bring back the dead to life; the widow was the first who received her dead raised to life again; and the widow's son was the first to whose body the life returned after the soul had taken its flight to the unseen world of spirits.

But we come now to the dark shadow which fell on that widowed mother's dwelling: "*And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.*" The sickness was sudden, and as suddenly fatal. The voice of the innocent prattler was hushed in death, the mother's darling was a lifeless corpse in the house, and the mother's grief knew no bounds. Her only joy was fled; the hope of her declining years, before it had fairly budded, was nipped by the icy hand of death. Her husband, on whose strong arm she had leaned, had been taken away; and her only solace in affliction was this boy—perhaps their only child—whom father and mother received as a new pledge of unfailling wedded love. At the father's death, on this boy she placed the whole wealth of a widowed mother's love, sanctified and intensified by suffering. He was the light of the house; but the light was gone out in darkness. The day she met the prophet she expected to eat with the boy their last meal; and then mother and boy were to lie down and die. But her dead hopes had been quickened into life by the assuring words of the prophet of God. The meal had not wasted, the oil had not failed, the lives of mother and son had been saved, and their home was made happy by the presence of the prophet, at whose word the meal and oil were being continuously multiplied in the barrel and cruse. All the fond anticipations of the future—in which at one time she had indulged, but which had been dissipated by the famine—had been revived by the Tishbite's words. Relieved of the fear of death by famine, the thought of death entering the charmed circle of her household had no more place in her thoughts. The prophet's presence was a guarantee of life. The prophet's God, who saved both herself and son from starving, would surely, as long as his prophet remained be-

neath her roof, guard her home against the approach of death. But if he should come, least of all did she think that his darts would be aimed at the boy. But now that death had entered her dwelling, that his pointed shafts had pierced, with deadly wound, her darling and pride, her faith in the prophet and in the prophet's God was tried to the utmost. Stunned by the suddenness and severity of the blow, the widowed mother gave way to paroxysms of grief which found vent in passionate remonstrance against the cruelty of the deed—an act which she ascribed to the prophet, to whom she had given food and shelter. “*What have I to do with thee,*” she cried, “*O thou man of God?*” Upbraiding herself for her sin—what special sin, if any, we know not—she accused the prophet of being the author of her sin's punishment. “*Art thou come unto me,*” she vehemently cried, “*to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?*” Widow of Zarephath, what Elijah's God hath done thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know presently, and the knowledge thereof will bring comfort and joy to thy troubled heart!

The stern prophet is now all tenderness and gentleness. He upbraids not the remonstrance of the anguished mother. No reproof escapes his lips. He utters no word in his own defense. His heart is too full of sympathy to blame the mother's hasty and impassioned accusation. He is profoundly moved because this dire calamity has fallen upon the friendly house that gave him food and lodging and a hiding-place from his enemies. The death of the boy, at such a time and under such circumstances, is as mysterious to him as it seemed to the woman cruel and vindictive. He speaks no word in justification or in explanation of the terrible blow. On the contrary, he acts as if he feels that his own honor and the honor of his God had been compromised. To the woman he gently says, “*Give me thy son:*”

and, taking him "out of her bosom," he carries him to his own upper room, and lays him upon his own bed. Alone with God and the dead child, he vehemently expostulates with him who had taken the child's life. "*And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord, my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?*" Elijah is terribly in earnest; his cry is impassioned and importunate. Three times, in agony, he stretches himself upon the child. He batters heaven's gates with his entreaties, and will take no denial. With pathetic expostulations and fervid intercessions, he storms the throne of heaven's Eternal King. He "*cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord, my God, I pray thee, let the child's soul come into him again.*" Nothing short of life restored to the boy will satisfy Elijah. He who took the boy's young life must give it back. Nothing else will be a recompense to the widowed mother for the calamity which despoiled her home and wrung her heart. And nothing else will vindicate the honor of God and the honor of his prophet. The patriarch did not wrestle with the angel of the covenant more earnestly and persistently for his own life, when it was threatened by his wronged and offended brother, than Elijah prayed for the life of the son of the widow of Zarephath.

What a prayer! what a request! Nothing like it had been heard in Israel. Is the Tishbite in his right senses? is he at himself? is he not as much beside himself as the anguished mother? For whoever heard that one dead had been restored to life again? Had such a prayer ever been offered before by one inspired of God? Enoch was not; for God took him: "*Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him.*" While yet alive God caught him up to heaven. And yet, not even he, after his translation, returned, and lived again upon the earth. No human soul, having once

left it, ever lived again in the flesh. Not one, having once returned to God who gave it, ever again tenanted the earthly house of its tabernacle. But what had not been heard of before, Elijah asks! He prays that the living soul may return to the dead child; that the dead corpse may be quickened into life; that the soul may again inhabit its body of flesh and blood; that the boy may be restored alive to his mother. And the strange request is heard! the aforesaid unheard-of prayer is answered! Elijah prevails with God! *“And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother; and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth! And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.”*

Blessed be the Lord God of Elijah! For from the Tishbite's day till now it has been known that it is not an incredible thing that God can raise the dead. Ever since he came down from that upper room at Zarephath and delivered to its mother the dead child restored to life, it has been truthfully said, *“Women received their dead raised to life again.”* The widow of Zarephath was the *first* on whom this honor was bestowed, and Elijah was the honored instrument by which it was done. The Shunammite was the *second*; Elisha, Elijah's successor, on whom Elijah's mantle fell, was the prophet by whom the Lord God raised her dead son to life again. The widow of Nain was the *third*; Jesus of Nazareth, by his own word, called her dead son back to life from his bier. The sisters—Martha and Mary—were the *fourth*, whose dead brother Lazarus Jesus raised from the grave. Elijah and Elisha had no power in themselves to raise the dead; their power was all of God. But Jesus had the power in himself; for he is the resurrection

and the life. By raising the dead in his own name and by his own authority, he proclaimed himself to be the Son of God with power. And this power was forever confirmed by his own triumph over death and resurrection from the dead. Elijah and Elisha were his ministers and servants; Jesus is Lord of all. Elijah and Elisha were men of like passions with ourselves; Jesus is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image—the exact counterpart—of the Father's substance, essence, or essential being. Elijah and Elisha were but men; Jesus is Immanuel—God with us, the everlasting Father, very and eternal God. Elijah and Elisha spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; Jesus himself is truth—his words are spirit and they are life. Elijah and Elisha pronounced judgments by God's commands; Jesus is Judge of quick and dead. Elijah and Elisha performed all their miracles in the name and by the authority of God; Jesus has all authority and all power in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Neither Elijah nor Elisha could perform a single creative act; Jesus made all things that are made, and without him there was not any thing made that was made. Neither Elijah nor Elisha could save a single soul from sin and death; Jesus has brought to light life and immortality by the gospel, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. Elijah and Elisha were but prophets; Jesus is the Saviour of the world, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Elijah and Elisha, like all their fellow-servants the prophets, served on earth, and serve in heaven; Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, at whose name every knee must bow. Elijah and Elisha could only point out the way that leads from earth to heaven; Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Elijah and Elisha were commissioned to show that



it is not an incredible thing that God can raise the dead; Jesus, by laying down his own life and taking it up again, has demonstrated his power to raise from the dead all that are in their graves. We honor Elijah and Elisha, because they were the first to show God's power to raise the dead; to Jesus we ascribe all honor and blessing and power and dominion, because he is over all, God blessed forever, conqueror of death and hell, at whose voice, in the last day, all that are in the graves shall come forth—they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

It was a day of anguish and despair in the lonely dwelling at Zarephath when the son of its widowed mistress suddenly fell sick and died. It was a blithesome day, radiant with hope, in the same house at Zarephath when the prophet of God delivered to his mother that boy brought back to life again. That mother's faith in God and in his prophet, which, by the death of her boy, had received a sudden and terrific shock, is now as suddenly and gloriously revived by his life. Terrible was the ordeal through which it passed; it is now like fine gold tried in the hottest furnace and purified of all its dross. And to Elijah the happy, joyous mother exultingly exclaims: "*Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth!*"

Blessed was the widow woman of Zarephath, who saw her son after he was raised to life again! Blessed are they also who, having not seen, yet have believed that God is able to raise the dead! And all glory be to the Lord God of Elijah! With the triumphant heart-burst of blithe old Galilean Peter we close this chapter: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resur-*

*rection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."*

## CHAPTER XII.

### ELIJAH LEAVES ZAREPHATH.

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WE must now away from Zarephath. We must leave the widow and her son, and follow Elijah. The interesting family-group at Zarephath is broken up forever; the widow and the boy remain, but God calls Elijah from his quiet and peaceful life in the Zidonian city to one of stirring and perilous activity in Samaria. We shall hear no more of the widow; she has no more place in the Tishbite's life. Except the reference to her in the New Testament, no further mention is made of her in the Holy Scriptures. Nor is any thing further said of the son, the boy so miraculously raised from the dead. But we must not fail to mention the tradition which makes him the same as the prophet Jonah. While there is no shadow of authority for that Oriental legend, there is something in the life of Jonah reminding us of the Tishbite. If Jonah and the widow's son were one and the same person, we might at least fancy that we trace the Tishbite's influence upon the boy. The weird-like character of the prophet was well calculated to make a deep and lasting impression on his youthful heart and mind—an impression greatly deepened and intensified by the fact that he was restored to life by Elijah. Jonah's petulance because Nineveh was not destroyed suggests Elijah's petulance because he had to flee from Jezreel, and was not permitted to cut off the priests of Jezebel as he had slain the priests of Baal at the brook Kishon. But here again we must not anticipate. We must on to the stirring events to which the Tishbite hurries us.

*“And it came to pass, after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.”* Jehovah’s purpose by the drought has been accomplished; three years and a half have passed since it was sent at Elijah’s word. Israel’s God again has dealings with Israel’s idolatrous king, and God’s prophet Elijah is again God’s accredited ambassador to Ahab. By the word of Elijah the dew and rain had ceased, and by his word must they return.

The Tishbite joyfully obeys the command ordering him to Jezreel. With impatience, but with impatience subdued by submission to the Divine will, he had remained concealed and inactive in the Phœnician city by the sea. Gladly he hears the summons to Ahab’s court and ivory house. The war-horse in Job, pawing in the valley, rejoicing in his strength, mocking at fear, and smelling the battle afar off, is no mean illustration of the bold Tishbite’s eagerness for the contest with Ahab and Jezebel, and with the idolatrous priests of Baal and Ashtoreth. Bidding adieu to the family at Zarephath, Elijah hastens to Samaria.

Whatever the route by which the prophet went from Cherith to Zarephath, we may be sure he took the directest route to Jezreel, or to Samaria, or wherever Ahab was. If any part of his present route lay in his way when he went to Zarephath, how changed, even from what they were then, are all things which now meet his view! A drought of nearly a year’s duration was upon the land when he journeyed to the Phœnician city; the blighting effects of an uninterrupted drought of three years and a half confront him on his return. If its effects were surprising then, they are appalling now. Desolation reigns supreme. Nor running brook, nor verdant leaf, nor green blade of grass, is anywhere to be seen. Beneath are baked and seamed hill-

sides and valleys; above are brassy heavens and a torrid sun. The fields and gardens are a barren waste, as if the hottest sirocco-breath had swept them. The trees of the forest and the vines and olives are withered from the roots. No caroling birds gleesomely hop from twig to twig, or merrily fill the woods and vineyards with song. No sound of tinkling bells is heard in the folds; for the flocks and herds, in search of water, have been driven to far-off streams. If any beasts of burden appear, the sunken and glassy eye, the slow and limping gait, the exposed ribs and projecting hip-bones, reveal how sore has been the drought. Gaunt famine is the regnant power; pestilence and death follow in its train. Hushed are the shouts of the reapers in harvest-time; silenced is the milkmaid's song, and silenced the peasant's harp. From many hamlets and from houses along the way voices of Rachels, weeping for their children, and refusing to be comforted because they are not, are borne mournfully and heavily upon the heated air. The reap-hook and threshing-flail, the plow and the ax, and all the implements of husbandry and toil, are hung up or stored away in empty barns. Pale, wan, half-famished sons and daughters of Israel, who, having forsaken the God of Abraham, worshiped Baal and kissed his image, crowd the highways, begging bread to satisfy their gnawing hunger, and imploring water to quench their burning thirst. Everywhere the prophet beholds a land cursed for the idolatrous worship of Ahab and Jezebel, and for the sins of the court and people.

It is needless to tell how Elijah's heart was pierced with anguish by the desolation of Israel, and how his righteous anger was kindled against those whose iniquities and idolatries had brought all this distress upon the goodly land of his fathers. Though the prophet was a mere man, and no creator of the land which once "flowed with milk and,

honey," yet, if the disciple is as his master, and the servant as his lord, he must have had something of the feelings which Jesus afterward felt when he looked on earth amid the ruins of his own works. Elijah, as best he can, makes his way toward his destination burdened by the sad sights which he saw and the plaintive sounds which he heard, but comforted and strengthened by the purpose to root out idolatry from the land, and by the expectation of soon bringing back the dew and rain.

While the Tishbite is pursuing his lonely journey to Jezreel, its wicked and idolatrous king, leaving his palace in Samaria, and taking with him Obadiah, the governor of his house, sets out in search of provender for the half-famished horses and mules of the royal ecurie. Dividing the land between them, "*Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.*" For "*Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.*" And while Obadiah, having parted from Ahab, is on his way "to pass throughout" the regions assigned to him, he is suddenly and unexpectedly confronted by Elijah the Tishbite. Ahab's steward, recognizing the prophet of God, and falling on his face before him, exclaims: "*Art thou that my lord Elijah?*" "*And Elijah answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.*" The Tishbite's answer startles the good Obadiah; the prophet's command to inform Ahab of his presence fills him with alarm. He could not believe it was the prophet's purpose to show himself to Ahab; he thought it too rash an act for even the bold Tishbite. For had not Ahab, for over three years, been seeking Elijah? was there a nation or kingdom whither his own spies and his queen's detectives had not gone in search of him? And for what purpose was he seeking the

prophet? for what but, by imprisonment and torture, to force him to speak the word that should bring back dew and rain to Samaria? for what but, after having forced him to speak that word, to slay him for his temerity, and for the calamity he had brought upon Israel? The good Obadiah knew that such were the fell purposes of Ahab—if not the latter purpose, at least the former. And if the latter was not Ahab's, he had no doubt it was Jezebel's the moment she could lay hands on the prophet. Wherefore, knowing what would be Ahab's disappointment and Ahab's wrath if he should not find Elijah in the place where he told him he was to be found, Obadiah answered Elijah, and said: "*What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee; and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me; but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.*"

Such was the earnest remonstrance of Obadiah against the doing of that which the prophet had ordered him to do. He feared the Spirit of the Lord would suddenly bear Elijah away. It was thus, perhaps, the prophet had been delivered from Ahab's power after his first appearance to him: at least such may have been the common report and the common belief in all the regions of Samaria. Nor was it an impossible or an improbable thing for that God to do who had translated Enoch, and who afterward translated Elijah, from earth to heaven. The sons of the prophets, who witnessed from Jericho Elijah's aerial flight, thought

that the Spirit of the Lord had caught up their master and taken him into some mountain or into some valley. It was the Spirit of the Lord who afterward caught up Ezekiel and bore him to the captives at Tel-abib, by the river of Chebar. And it was the Spirit of the Lord who caught up the evangelist Philip, and hurried him from Gaza to Azotus. And it makes no difference whether the Spirit of the Lord seized them, and bore them bodily aloft, or whether he indued them with supernatural power, and gave them the swift feet of roes or the rapid wings of eagles. In either view the power was supernatural, and the effects were the same. At all events, the fears of Obadiah, in that day of miraculous intervention, were not without foundation. He believed that God would not allow his prophet to abide Ahab's wrath, but would miraculously snatch him from his power. And hence he believed that if he delivered Elijah's message to Ahab, it would be at the certain cost of his own head. But what had he done, what sin had he sinned, to merit such punishment? He expostulates with Elijah by reminding him of his kindness to the prophets of God when Jezebel was seeking to destroy them: "*Was it not told my lord,*" said Obadiah, "*what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here; and he shall slay me.*" Elijah answers, and, answering, removes Obadiah's doubts and fears: "*And Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to-day.*" The oath of the prophet of God is enough; Obadiah is satisfied; he knows that Elijah will be true to his word. And "*so Obadiah went to to meet Ahab, and told him.*"



## CHAPTER XIII.

### OBADIAH.

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OBADIAH is no mean personage in the drama of Elijah, though his position is subordinate, and he loses immensely by comparison with the prophet. The grand and colossal proportions of the Tishbite so engross its interest we may not do justice to others in the play. And yet the widow and her son justly claimed and held our attention. The good Obadiah is entitled to equal, if not greater, consideration. And if the supreme interest were not so centered in Elijah, Obadiah would appear to be—what he truly and intrinsically was—one of the best of all subordinate Old Testament characters.

The governor of Ahab's house was a man of deepest piety, truest courage, and signal humanity. "*But I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.*" This was what he said of himself to Elijah. The fear of the Lord, of which he speaks, is doubtless that filial, reverential fear, which is ever the basis of all real piety, and the invariable and unfailing characteristic of every true and devout worshiper of Jehovah. It is a powerful incentive to perfect holiness. It is clean, enduring forever. It is strong confidence, and a fountain of life. It is riches and honor—yea, as with Hezekiah, it is the saint's peculiar treasure. It brings the comforts of the Holy Ghost. It possesses the secret of the Lord; and to it is revealed the hidden meaning of his covenant. To them that have it there is no want; and round about them encampeth the angel of the Lord. Their names are written in a book of remembrance, and they shall be jewels in

the cabinet of their King. They are of the number of those concerning whom it is written: "*And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.*"

This was the fear of the Lord, which Obadiah had; it was filial and not servile. In all his official and private life it was the pole-star by which his whole conduct was guided. For what he says of himself, and much more, divine inspiration ascribes to him. Does he say that he feared the Lord from his youth? The inspired historian confirms it, and adds, "*Obadiah feared the Lord greatly.*" Not so high was the eulogy bestowed upon Hananiah, the ruler of the palace of Nehemiah. Hananiah "*feared God above many;*" Obadiah "*feared the Lord greatly.*" And this is said of Obadiah at the time he is introduced to us; it was his characteristic then. It is the judgment of the Lord God of Israel respecting his servant, and is only affirmed of one preëminent for piety. It is as high an encomium as is pronounced upon the saints. For it imports that he who thus fears has sanctified the Lord of hosts himself, and made God, and God alone, his fear and dread. It implies perfect consecration, perfect obedience, perfect faith, perfect love, and a conscience "quick as the apple of an eye." It means a shrinking from the least infraction of the holy, just, and good law of God. It indicates that the least omission is displeasing and dishonoring to him who is loved as a Father with all the heart. Every such judgment, pronounced by him who searcheth the hearts, is preëminent praise, when, wherever, and of whomsoever it is affirmed. But it has signal emphasis when it is affirmed of Obadiah. For if trials and temptations be any true test of piety and courage;

if, in an estimate of them, the surroundings are to be taken into the account; if their real worth bear any proportion to the difficulties, perils, and seductions to which they are exposed, then, indeed, was most exalted praise bestowed upon his servant Obadiah when the Lord Jehovah said that he "*feared the Lord greatly.*"

Obadiah's previous history is as unknown to us as Elijah's before his appearing to Ahab. And yet something is said of Obadiah which is not said of Elijah. We conjectured that the prophet was the son of pious Hebrew parents, and that from a child he was brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But we know that Obadiah received early religious training and discipline, for he "*feared the Lord from his youth.*" The wisest of men has said, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*" In this inspired saying precept and promise are indissolubly wedded; and if the one be faithfully kept, the other will be the invariable sequence. Rightly understood, the saying of the wise man is a scriptural axiom; it is one of the truest and most precious of Bible maxims. Obedience to this precept, and faith in this promise of covenant-keeping Jehovah will bring the promised reward. We know not whether the pious parents of Obadiah lived to see its fulfillment in the future of their boy; but we do know that the boy was "father to the man." The boy who remembered his Creator in the days of his youth had a sure refuge and strength, when "the evil days" came. And they did come to Obadiah; for his manhood was cast upon troublous and perilous times. Strong temptations and fiery trials tested to the utmost the piety which he formed in youth. But it was, according to covenant and promise, fully equal, through grace, to its tests. The young twig, which loving and pious hands had trained, grew into a stalwart oak, that withstood the fiercest tempests. The

boy who "*feared the Lord from his youth,*" "*feared the Lord greatly*" in manhood. This fear, which is the beginning both of knowledge and wisdom, having begun in his youth and steadily grown with increase of years, furnished him with all knowledge and wisdom for the dark and terrible days in which his life was spent.

At the time Obadiah is introduced to us, he was "*the governor*" of Ahab's house. He was the lord high chancellor, or mayor of the palace. By what steps he rose to this high eminence at the idolatrous court of Ahab and Jezebel, we are not informed. And yet we are sure that he who sent Joseph to the court of the Pharaohs, Nehemiah to that of Artaxerxes Longimanus at Sushan, and Daniel to that of Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon, sent Obadiah to Ahab's palace. And as God was with Joseph, and Nehemiah, and Daniel, ordering the train of providences, by which they were advanced to their respective high positions; so God was with his servant Obadiah, directing the providential movements which placed him over Ahab's house. He was there by God's command; and while there he was sustained by his grace. And he retained the Divine approval, or it would not have been recorded by the Holy Ghost: "*Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly. For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.*"

We may be surprised to find Obadiah in the service of a wicked and idolatrous prince, but not more surprised than we are to see Joseph second in command to Pharaoh in Egypt, or Nehemiah cup-bearer to Artaxerxes Longimanus in Sushan, or Daniel in the college of the Babylonish Nebuchadnezzar, or the first of three presidents set by Darius the Mede over the one hundred and twenty princes of his realm. Joseph and Nehemiah and Daniel served idolatrous and

foreign courts; the two latter not only served idolatrous and foreign kings, but kings who had subjugated and laid waste the land of their fathers, and carried themselves and their brethren captive to Babylon. Obadiah was at home in his own free Samaria; he was the subject of his lawful Israelitish king. If it was permitted others to serve idolatrous foreign princes, it was allowed Obadiah to serve an idolatrous native prince. Nor was there any thing in the law of his God forbidding the service. Indeed, as already said, he was over Ahab's house by God's command. And as it was with the others, so it was with Obadiah. The real questions with them all were, *How* they served? how did they use their power? did they preserve their integrity? were they true to their royal masters? were they just and merciful to the people? But, above all, were they true to God? were they true to his worship? did they keep his commandments? did they rule in his fear? was there no compromise with the idolatrous courts which they served? was there no bowing the knees to the Baalism of the princes? did they refuse to say *a confederacy* to all the wicked and idolatrous who said *a confederacy* to them? were they incorruptible, doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with their God? did they have the Divine approval and the testimony of a good conscience? did they, in fine, render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's? We can confidently answer all these questions affirmatively if asked of Joseph in Egypt, or of Nehemiah and Daniel in Chaldea; with equal confidence we are warranted, by the sacred record, to return the same answer when asked of Obadiah in Samaria. His extremely delicate and difficult duties were discharged with fidelity to his prince, and with loyalty to his God. He preserved his integrity. His services were so invaluable to his king that he retained him in his high and responsible office notwith-

standing he refused to bow the knee to Baal. At his own imminent peril he braved the wrath of the cruel and vengeful queen; and when she attempted to cut off all the prophets of God, Obadiah, unmoved by the fear of detection, and, if detected, by the certain loss of his own head, daringly hid one hundred of the Lord's prophets, and fed them at his own expense. Neither from the Lord God of Israel nor from his prophet Elijah does Obadiah receive a single word of condemnation, either for remaining in Ahab's palace or for his conduct while over it.

Consider the position which he held in Ahab's palace, and then ask whether incorruptible integrity, sleepless vigilance, unflinching courage, and unswerving faith were not necessary to meet its demands? For Obadiah was no dissembler. If he had been, he would have been unfaithful to God; if he had been, the God of Israel would never have put it upon record that he "*feared the Lord greatly.*" Ahab well knew Obadiah's loyalty to Israel's God; and, it is likely, he even hated him for it. But the king knew the understanding, the wisdom, and the integrity of the governor of his house. He knew how important he was to his kingdom. If he had been wanting in service, he could not have held his place in the king's palace. Ahab would have delivered him over to Jezebel to do with him as she had done to many of the Lord's prophets. And that this was not done is evidence that Obadiah's refusal to bow the knee to Baal was condoned by the king on account of the eminent service which the governor of the palace rendered to the State. But, after all, the worship of Israel's God was not so proscribed by Ahab that it was an unpardonable offense. For, as we saw while considering the Baalism of this idolatrous king, he did not so much proscribe the worship of Jehovah as he insisted upon the right of Baal to divine homage. Not that Jehovah was not God, but that Baal was God also.

The Zidonian queen, if she could have had undisputed sway, would have slain every worshiper of Jehovah, and have made the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth the only religion both of the court and people. But Ahab, much as he was under the influence of the daughter of Ethbaal, was not the weakling, which some have inconsiderately represented. For he was not without the qualities of a great general; he was not without capacities, which, had he been a pious prince, would have fitted him to be a good ruler. Nor was he always wanting in will-power even when opposed by his unscrupulous and impetuous queen. The retention of Obadiah as governor of his house showed that he could sometimes be not only wise in policy but firm in purpose. Not only the retention of Obadiah, but his subsequent obedience to Elijah when commanded to summons Israel and the priests of Baal and Ashtoreth to assemble on Mount Carmel, his acquiescence in the sentence of the prophet when Elijah slew the priests of Baal at the brook Kishon, and his humiliation and contrition after the Tishbite's denunciation for the part he had in the affair of Naboth's vineyard, were all, as he knew, in direct opposition to Jezebel's overbearing will and fiery temper. - No doubt he did not adopt all of Jezebel's Phenician religious ideas. If he did, he was too wise and politic to carry out all the extreme measures the religious frenzy of his queen suggested. He may have been—but we think not—as idolatrous and fanatical as Jezebel; if he was, he had too much discretion to manifest it as she did. Hence he retained in his service a devout worshiper of the God of Israel, even though he refused to bow the knee to Jezebel's gods. Call this statecraft—give to it whatever name you please—and it still proves what we are claiming for the wicked and idolatrous Ahab.

If we are correct in our estimate of Obadiah, he was an

able statesman, a true patriot, and a courageous man, as well as a man of eminent piety. In the very delicate and difficult position to which we have alluded, growing out of the religious policy of his king—which was a compromise between Jehovah and Baal—he served his God with such uncompromising fidelity that no charge of unfaithfulness is alleged against him by the inspired historian. And without any comprehension of Baalism, he served his country in her sorest need, and received no accusation from the prince whose servant he was, or from the God to whom he gave supreme allegiance. To have deserved such freedom from condemnation, many must have been his unrecorded deeds of loyalty to both, and of faithfulness to the idolatrous subjects of Ahab and the persecuted servants of Jehovah. The man who hid one hundred prophets in a cave, and fed them at his own charges, must have performed many other benevolent and humane acts. The man who, to do this, exposed himself to the displeasure of his king and to the wrath of his queen—and of such a queen as Jezebel—must have been of undaunted courage. Nothing but the stanchest courage, the truest patriotism, and the stoutest faith could have induced one of his religious convictions to accept position at such a wicked and idolatrous court; yea, nothing but such an express command of God as Joseph had in Egypt, and Nehemiah and Daniel in Chaldaea, could have sent him there; and, while there, nothing but like faith and courage to theirs could have kept him and sustained him in Ahab's service. For no doubt he often vexed his righteous soul with the filthy conversation and unlawful deeds of the wicked. If the one hundred and twentieth Psalm had been written, he might have joined in the psalmist's plaint: "*Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesek, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!*" And yet this "lily among thorns"—an epithet from Canticles, which



both Krummacher and Taylor apply to Obadiah—was emboldened and cheered by the thought that God could and would preserve him, though his soul dwelt among lions. “He had not seen his way, indeed,” says Dr. Taylor, “to follow the example of those priests and Levites and servants of Jehovah who, in the days of Jeroboam, left their lands behind them and went into the country of Judah in order that they might enjoy the privilege of worshiping the God of Israel according to the Mosaic ritual.” No, indeed; he did not see his way to leave his city possessions or his suburban villas, if any he had in Israel, and go over to build up the kingdom of Judah and make it strong; for duty, and patriotism, and humanity, and the command of his God, called him to stay where he could succor the persecuted prophets of the Most High. At such a time and in such a crisis the place for Obadiah was Ahab’s palace. Instead of showing a want of courage or of loyalty to God to remain there, he showed the truest courage and the truest loyalty to abide at that post of duty and peril, that he might do all the good he could to his afflicted country and people. He richly deserves the greatest credit for continuing in Ahab’s house and resisting its temptations. It shows the power of God’s grace to sustain in every lawful calling, however much that calling, above others, may be exposed to special temptations and be beset with peculiar hazards. From Obadiah’s example there is great encouragement to all engaged in any business lawful but hazardous to piety; there is none whatever to any employed in what is unlawful, and therefore forbidden. “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing,*” is God’s command to all following forbidden callings. No man can engage in the unlawful and preserve integrity, a good conscience, and the approval of God; for God allows no compromise with sin. It was not sin to take office under Ahab;

if it had been, Obadiah could not have preserved his piety and loyalty to God. If in his high office he compromised religious principle, he could not have retained the Divine approval; if his place in Ahab's house had been a forbidden one, he would have forfeited, as soon as he entered upon the service, all claim to the fear of the Lord. Had Obadiah, at Ahab's command, bowed the knee to Baal, God would have cast him off. Had Daniel, fearing the decree of the Persian monarch, left off his prayers to the God of Israel; had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego bowed down before and worshiped the image in the plain of Dura, the sacred history would have wanted the marvelous deliverances in the den of lions and in the fiery furnace. It is impossible to tell—the last day alone will reveal it—how much good one truly pious and of uncompromising religious principle may accomplish at a wicked court. We know the influence Joseph exerted upon Pharaoh, Nehemiah upon Artaxerxes, Esther upon Ahasuerus, and Daniel upon Darius. Joseph saved his father and his brethren alive in a seven years' famine; Nehemiah procured authority and help to rebuild the walls and temple of Jerusalem; Esther delivered her people from the indiscriminate massacre which the wicked Haman designed; Daniel obtained from a heathen prince the decree that the God of Israel "is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end." We are not informed how far Obadiah kept back the wicked and idolatrous Ahab from the extreme measures of the crafty Jezebel. But we know enough to infer that his presence and influence must have been a powerful restraint upon the king. God grant that every Ahab may have his Obadiah, every Pharaoh his Joseph, every Artaxerxes his Nehemiah, every Ahasuerus his Esther, every Darius his

Daniel, every Louis XIV. his Fénelon, and every Henry VIII. his Sir Thomas More! O for men in high places whose stipulation, before they take office, shall be that of King Henry's chancellor: "First to look to God, and after God to the king!"

There is no lawful avocation, however encompassed by temptations and beset by dangers to personal piety, in which one may not through grace preserve religious integrity, and keep "a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward man." By keeping three simple rules we may come out of the hottest fiery furnace with no smell of fire upon our garments: *First*, never do what we know God forbids. *Second*, leave undone whatever is doubtful, avoiding the very appearance of evil; for it is much better, if we make a mistake, to find that we have left undone some good thing than to find that we have done a bad thing. *Third*, whatever we know God commands, do—even if we lose life in the doing of it. For he that knowingly commits sin is of the devil; and he that doubts is damned. And whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for Christ's sake shall find it.

If these things are so, if grace is all-sufficient, and we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us, let no one plead the temptations to which his special calling is exposed as an excuse for sin, or for any compromise of Christian character. A place in the army, the navy, the merchant marine, the railroads, the State legislatures, the National Congress, or whatever is not proscribed by divine law, may be held without the compromise of religious principle or the loss of spiritual power. Christian men, when called in God's providence to either of the above departments of human labor, have wide fields for usefulness. And they "may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,"

shining "as lights in the world," and "holding forth the word of life." They may be as leaven, as salt, as a light upon a candlestick, and as a city upon a hill. It is theirs to elevate those around them, and by their pious example win the ungodly to the cross of Christ. The larger the number of thoroughly Christian men, "established in the faith," and "rooted and grounded in love"—men of incorruptible religious integrity and heroic courage—who enter into these and similar pursuits, the better for the Church and country; for many lawful callings are powerful instruments for evil in the hands of wicked and irreligious men. They ought to be taken and held for Christ. And if consecrated men could control them, all special evils not necessarily appertaining but made incident to them would soon be removed, and they would become potential factors in the salvation of men and the spread of holiness.

But let no one be careless in the choice of a pursuit. Let him see to it that it is *lawful*, and not *unlawful*; and we use these terms not with respect to human but divine law, for a calling may be authorized and protected by the one and utterly at variance with the other. Such are all pursuits as have not in view the honor of God and the good of man. Whatever is dishonoring to God and hurtful to man is not to be engaged in; no, not for a moment. And all human laws which authorize and protect them are wicked and abominable, and their corrupt makers God will judge and punish. Such are laws which authorize the profaning of God's holy Sabbath and license the saloon and the bar-room; such are laws which wink at, if they do not authorize, the pools of gamblers and the brothels of abandoned women; such are laws which, while they condemn, are so hampered as to make the conviction of the offender almost, if not quite, impossible; and such are laws ostensibly for the suppression of vice, but so laden with disabling amend-

ments as to be inoperative and void. Nor is it enough that the calling be good and approved of God; the rules which govern it must be good also, and have the Divine sanction. The pursuit may be good, but the procedure may be bad. Bad men may control and run it. Railroads, steam-ships, the telegraph, the telephone, and the manufactory are useful and lawful; but they may be under the control of those who neither fear God nor regard man. Bad directors and bad officials may make bad laws such as no saint of God can keep and preserve clean hands, a pure heart, and a good conscience. They may require work to be done in such a manner and at such times as no good man can do and not offend the supreme Lawgiver and Judge of all. The man who fears God will obey God rather than man; and he will never suffer, by any act of his own, the human law to contravene the divine; he will never allow a compromise between God and Mammon, between duty to God and any worldly interest. Daniel maintained his integrity at a Babylonish court; Obadiah "*feared the Lord greatly*" in the palace of Ahab.

But we must say something about Obadiah's expostulation at the time Elijah ordered him to tell Ahab of his presence. The good man has been belabored most unmercifully for want of courage. The order of Elijah, we are told, "greatly disconcerted the *timid* Obadiah." Mark the word which we have italicized. Was the man *timid* who remained true to his God when the love of nearly all Israel waxed cold, and iniquity abounded in the palace and in all the land? was he *timid* who, at the peril of his life, hid the prophets and kept feeding them? was he *timid* who "*feared the Lord greatly?*" or is the fear of the Lord akin to cowardice, and the greater the one the greater the other?

Obadiah must be judged by the lights which he had. It was with him not a question of courage, but one of com-

mon sense. Who exposes himself to certain death without a reason for it, unless he knows it is God's will and by God's command? True courage is not blind; it is not rash. It is said Obadiah had faith, but he had not "added to it the higher courage." Is faith without eyes? does it not at least come by hearing? and what did Obadiah hear to strengthen his faith? When Elijah issued his command to him, was it accompanied by any promise? All that Obadiah wanted was that which always attends upon God's commands. Is there a command of God without its promise? When God told Abraham to offer up Isaac, the patriarch was sustained by the promise that in Isaac should his name be called; persuaded if he slew his son that God would give him back from the dead. When God told Moses to lead out the children of Israel from Goshen, Moses was not satisfied till the Lord promised that his presence should go with him. When God ordered Joshua to compass Jericho, he accompanied the order with the promise that he would surely deliver it into his hands. When Elijah himself was sent to Cherith, he was told that the ravens were commanded to feed him; and when he was sent to Zarephath, he was informed that a widow woman there was commanded to sustain him. And when Christ sent his servants before kings and rulers, he promised to stand by them. And so when Elijah, in answer to the expostulation of Obadiah, swore by the ever-living Jehovah that he would show himself on that day to Ahab, Obadiah immediately obeyed; he went and told Ahab. And this he would have done at the first if, when Elijah said to him, "*Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here,*" he had added, as he afterward did, "*As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to-day.*"

But Obadiah's hazard was by no means over when the prophet swore that he would surely show himself to the

king. Obadiah believed the oath of Elijah; but how could he, without imminent peril to himself, bear such a message to Ahab? Had not the king taken an oath of every nation and kingdom whither he had sent in search of the prophet that they had not found him? Would he take their word before they confirmed their denial by the sanction of an oath? What risk must Obadiah run when he informs the imperious king that he had seen the Tishbite, but had not arrested him? Did it not require the stoutest courage and the strongest faith to deliver such a message, and to such a king? For was there a subject of Ahab in all Samaria who had not been ordered to seize the prophet? Disobedience to this command, it was to be expected, might be overlooked in any other sooner than in the governor of the palace. For not only would obedience be exacted of him because he was high in authority, and therefore ought to be an example to others, but because his religion, hated by the idolatrous court and queen, was calculated to make his loyalty an object of suspicion. And all this Obadiah knew. But he braved it all; he boldly took the risk; and "*so Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him.*"

When Obadiah expostulated with Elijah for sending him to Ahab, he dreaded not so much the death which seemed to him certain as the implied imputation upon his character as a worshiper of the true God. It was natural for him to suppose that Elijah was knowingly sending him to death because he adjudged him unfaithful to the God of Israel. But had he been unfaithful? had he not maintained his integrity even at the wicked and idolatrous court? had he bowed the knee to Baal? had he not shown his zeal for the Lord of hosts? had he not rescued one hundred of his prophets from Jezebel's malice? and were these things unknown to Elijah? They surely must be, or he would not expose to death a true and faithful servant of God. Where-

fore, Obadiah asks: "*Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?*" Could the Tishbite know this and say, "*Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here?*" "Would you send me to certain death," the question implies, "if all this were known to you? do you speak by the authority of the God whom I fear from my youth? is *he* angry with his servant? have I committed some unpardonable sin? This cannot be; Israel's God knows my innocence. He knows I speak the truth; he knows the fidelity of his servant, if his prophet knows it not. But God knows it all, and he surely will not let me die with such a dark cloud upon my name." Conscious of perfect loyalty to Elijah's God, Obadiah dreaded more than death the imputation which Elijah's command implied. And hence his remonstrance against it. It was the remonstrance of a true man, jealous of his good name, and not the cowardly appeal of one who feared to die. His earnest and emphatic expostulation was the true and righteous vindication of his character. Not more jealous of his good name was the patriarch Job when he indignantly repelled the accusations of his friends. Relieved by the prophet's reply, Obadiah did not hesitate a moment; he "*went to meet Ahab, and told him.*"



## CHAPTER XIV.

### CHARGE AND COUNTER-CHARGE.

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**O**BADIAH has left Elijah, and gone in search of Ahab. As they had not long been separated, and the servant knew where to look for his master, the latter is soon found. The governor of the royal palace informs the king that the long-sought Elijah is found, and is waiting to see him. One may be curious to know how he received the announcement. Three years and a half had passed since the prophet had appeared to him and spoke the word which brought the drought. Whatever he thought of the prediction at the time it was spoken, the king has long been satisfied that the dew and rain were withheld by that word, and that it alone could restore them. With what feelings he went to meet Elijah we know not; nor do we know what he purposed to do when he should meet him. But we have every reason to believe that the proud king was unchanged by the calamity which his wicked and idolatrous practices had brought upon his realm. It is more than likely he was rather hardened than softened by the merited judgments of God. And it is more than likely it was in his heart to deal summarily with Elijah, who had been bold to denounce his sins, and punish him for them. But whatever his purpose, he goes to meet the Tishbite, and the two are again brought face to face. It was a momentous interview, resulting in a contest whose issues far outlived their day—issues that still survive, and will be felt on earth till time shall be no more.

If it was Ahab's purpose to overawe Elijah, and force him to put an end to the protracted drought, he was

greatly disappointed by the result. We know not all that passed between them, for the only record of the interview is exceedingly brief. We are left to conjecture with what mien the king approached the bold prophet. If we judge his manner by the simple record before us, it was tame and subdued, compared with what we might have supposed. The prophet met him, we are sure in perfect keeping with his character as the accredited ambassador of the Lord God of Israel. His sheep-skin mantle and leathern girdle were in strange contrast with the splendid insignia and imposing regalia with which great Oriental potentates are wont to deck their representatives at courts. His were eyes that could hurl defiance at the idolatrous enemies of Jehovah, or look with tenderest sympathy on the lowly and afflicted. The serene majesty, the calm dignity, and the weird-like appearance of the Tishbite, confused the idolatrous Ahab. The king comes to the ambassador of Jehovah-God; the ambassador moves not a step to meet the king. "*Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here,*" was the laconic message the prophet of God sent to the King of Israel. There at the place where Obadiah left him Elijah awaits Ahab, and there Ahab finds him. The king, receiving no obeisance from the prophet, opens the interview. "*And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*" How different is this address from what we might have expected! Why does not the king apprehend the prophet as a refractory and disobedient subject, and a fugitive from justice? why does he not arrest him for disloyalty to his king, and for treason against the State? why does he not charge upon him the drought, the famine, the pestilence, the deaths, and all the calamities with which the drought inflicted Samaria? It may be he does include all these in his charge. But how softly is it put!—"Art thou he that

*troubleth Israel?*" The word we have italicized contains its *gravamen*. It might embrace things far more trivial and venial than drought and famine, and pestilence and death, and still be used with propriety. But even that is toned down by the form in which it is stated. For the charge is softened by the interrogative. Ahab knew the man before him. He had not the slightest doubt about his identity. He had seen that shaggy hair, and sheep-skin mantle, and leathern girdle. The glance of that fiery eye, that majestic form, that weird look, having once been seen could never be forgotten. Besides, was he not expecting to meet Elijah, and at this very place? Had he not received the prophet's message? and had not Obadiah informed him that Elijah was there to meet him? The king knew it all; and he knew what Elijah had done. He knew the man before him was the same bold prophet of God who had said to him, "*As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*" Wherefore how weak and tame is the charge, "*Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*" The accusation itself, and the manner in which it is put, shows how subdued and awed was the wicked and idolatrous king in the presence of God's ambassador and prophet. It was the awe of an inferior in the presence of a superior, and of weakness in the presence of strength; it was the dread of guilt before innocence, and of sin before holiness. For "conscience makes cowards of us all," and "the thief doth fear each bush an officer." "The wicked flee when no man pursueth," and "the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them."

In striking contrast with Ahab's false and feeble charge against Elijah is the true and bold indictment of the prophet against the king. "*And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast*

*followed Baalim.*" God's prophet does not "daub with untempered mortar;" nor does he cry, "*Peace, peace, when there is no peace.*" A sinful man, a presumptuous transgressor of God's law, a blatant apostate, a wicked ruler, an idolatrous king, and 'the real troubler' of Israel, is before him. He does not announce to Ahab the glad tidings that the word of the Lord came to him, saying: "*Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.*" This announcement is withheld, because Ahab is not ready to receive it. For has he not charged upon Elijah the troubles of Israel? Feeble as it is, it is still a charge, though a false one. For the real troubler of Israel is Israel's idolatrous king; his wickedness and idolatries are the cause of its calamities. It was Israel's God—not his prophet Elijah—who sent them. And they were sent upon Ahab as a punishment for the idol-worship he had set up in Samaria; and they were sent to humble his pride and lead him to repentance. But the judgments of God had failed of the effect which mercy graciously designed should be their chief and ultimate aim—the repentance, conversion, and salvation of the offender. That they did not have this effect upon Ahab is evident from the fact that he charges the troubles of Israel upon Elijah, and not upon himself. Instead of confessing his guilt, humbling himself, and imploring the Divine forgiveness, he hardens his heart and stiffens his neck; instead of forsaking his sins, he covers them up, and blames another for the calamities which they caused. It was for these reasons the prophet, at this interview, did not tell him his purpose to bring rain upon the earth. The haughty king must be humbled, and the just claims of Israel's God to supreme and undivided worship must be vindicated before reviving dews and refreshing rains revisit Samaria.

But let us follow up the prophet's indictment—"I have

*not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house."* When the drunken Elah, fourth king of Israel, was cut off by Zimri, "the captain of half his chariots," and Zimri usurped the throne, the army encamped against Gibbethon made Omri, "the captain of the host," king over Israel. This Omri, who was the father of Ahab, "*wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities.*" Omri and Ahab—father and son—were the real troublers of Israel, and not Elijah, in that they had "forsaken the commandments of the Lord." But, bad as was the father, the son was worse; for "*Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.*"

"*Ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord*" is the *first* count in the indictment. It was a charge against both father and son; and, though Omri was guiltier than all that went before him, Ahab was guiltier than he. "*Thou hast followed Baalim*" is the *second* count. *Ye* have forsaken the commandments of the Lord; *thou* hast followed Baalim. Both were guilty of the *first* count; the son alone was guilty of the *second*. The son did that which the father did not do. Both walked in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat; but in them the son was even a greater sinner than the father. For "*as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat,*" Ahab "*took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.*" And "*there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wicked-*

ness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."

"And thou hast followed Baalim" recalls the difference between the sin of Jeroboam and the sin of Ahab. The reader is reminded that Jeroboam admitted none but Jehovah to share in divine worship. The calves—as was said in a previous chapter—which he set up in Bethel and Dan, were mere representative images of Israel's only living and true God. His sin, therefore, was breaking the second commandment, which forbade the making and worship of any likeness or image of Jehovah. But Ahab introduced other gods, and gave to them divine homage. He placed the false gods of Phenicia above the God of Israel, and broke the first of the commandments. Jeroboam worshiped idols; but his idols were likenesses of Jehovah-God; but *Ahab followed Baalim*. Baalim, you will remember, is the plural of Baal, and comprehends gods many. The *Baalim* of Ahab, therefore, embraced all the gods of all the nations, whether Hebrew or heathen, but especially the Baal and Ashtoreth of the Zidonians. To them he erected temples, built altars, planted groves, and offered sacrifices; and of them he made likenesses or images, which he worshiped and kissed. These things the reader should always keep in mind, because they enter almost exclusively into the great contention between God and Elijah on the one side and Ahab and Israel on the other. The contest soon to take place on Carmel, to which the prophet is about to challenge the priests of Baal and Ashtoreth, will be a contest between the *Baalim* of Ahab and the one supreme and personal God of the Hebrews. If the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be the one only living and true God, then the sin of Ahab is exceedingly great, the judgments of God upon him are true and righteous altogether, and the counts in the prophet's indictment are triumphantly sustained.

We are hurried to the contest on Mount Carmel, but must delay to draw a lesson from the boldness and faithfulness of the prophet of God before the King of Israel. Like boldness and faithfulness are needed by the ministers of God in every age of the Church. O for the courage and fidelity of Moses before Pharaoh, of Elijah before Ahab and Ahaziah, of Samuel before Saul, of Nathan before David, of the prophet Jehu before Baasha, of Eliezer before Jehoshaphat, of Isaiah before Hezekiah, of John before Herod, and of St. Paul before Felix and Agrippa! O for the baptism of the Holy Ghost, induing the ministers of Jesus with power from on high, and inspiring them to speak the word of God with boldness! O that all the ministers and all the disciples of the Lord Jesus were like their Lord and Master, who, with tenderest compassion, wept over rebellious Jerusalem, but with merited rebukes denounced the scribes, Pharisees, and rulers of the people, and the unbelieving cities, where his mighty works were done! Great Head of the Church, purchased with thy own most precious blood, raise up, commission, qualify, and send forth ministers who shall have neither a man-fearing nor a man-pleasing spirit; who shall "know no man after the flesh;" and who shall "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine!" Lord Jesus, multiply, O multiply faithful and fearless ministers of the cross, who shall be blameless in life, eloquent of speech, and sound in doctrine! For the contest with Baalism in high places, in Church and State, in the pulpit, in the learned universities, in the laboratories of science, in the forum, on the bench, in the halls of legislation, and even on the farm and in the counting-room and workshop, is still going on as in Israel in the days of Elijah.

Let not the ambassadors of Christ be silenced by the false

charges which the Ahab's of this day may bring against them. As it was in the days of Elijah, so it is now; and so it will ever be until Satan is bound, the kingdom of God is fully come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Not only were false charges brought against Elijah, but graver charges were impiously and daringly brought against our blessed Lord, who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; and against his apostles who proclaimed the glad tidings, "*On earth peace, good-will toward men.*" It was not in Thessalonica alone the apostles encountered the spirit of those who cried, "*These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.*" The reformers had to contend with it in every age of the Church. In the olden times Elijah was not the only fugitive who was driven by it to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. "*Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, and were slain with the sword.*" In the early days of the Christian Church this fell spirit broke out afresh, and raged with impious fury. It brought the head of John the Baptist to the block; it slew the elder James with the sword; it murdered Stephen by stoning; and it nailed Peter to the cross. And it is claimed that all the apostles of the Lord except the beloved disciple were martyrs to its rage, and with their own hearts' blood sealed their witness to the truth of Jesus and the resurrection. At a later day the tyrant Nero—having set fire to Rome, reducing to ashes three of its fourteen wards, and nearly destroying seven others—to escape the odium of the deed, threw the blame on the Christians, put many to torture and death, and, "to dispel the darkness of the night when the day was gone," illuminated the city with the burning pitch with which he covered their bodies. Under Tra-



jan, Simeon, the venerable Bishop of Jerusalem, was crucified, and Ignatius, the renowned Bishop of Antioch, was thrown to wild beasts. The amiable and venerated Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, and Justin, the celebrated Christian philosopher, were martyred in the reign of Marcus Antoninus. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons under Severus, and Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage under Valerian and Gallienus, shared the same fate. The Roman public games were enlivened by the slaughter of Christians to appease the clamors of the populace that thirsted for their blood. The rescripts and edicts of Severus, of Decius, of Diocletian, and of other Roman emperors, persecuted the followers of Christ, and doomed many to death. Saracen and Turk, still later, laid waste the Church of God with fire and sword. And when the Church of Rome became corrupt, it butchered true believers in Jesus with all the ingenuity of torture and with all the refined cruelties of the Inquisition. The Waldenses, the Albigenses, the Palatines, and Netherlanders passed through the hottest fires of persecution. St. Bartholomew and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes slew multitudes of believers in France, or drove them into penniless exile. The fires of Smithfield drank up the life-blood of English Reformers; the relentless troopers of Claverhouse stained the Scottish heather with the blood and brains of the Covenanters; and when at last the sword was sheathed, and the fires of Smithfield were extinguished, the successors of Ahab did not lay aside their false accusations or the spirit of persecution. The doors of Bedford jail were closed upon John Bunyan; Richard Baxter was sentenced to a London prison; brutal blows, rotten eggs, and the horse-pond, with no sparing hand, were meted out to the followers of John Wesley. Nor at this day have they ceased to persecute the faithful and fearless ministers of the Lord Jesus.

Thanks to the victories of the religion of the meek and despised Nazarene, the forms of religious persecution have been changed. Death by wild beasts, the combats of the arena, the sword, and the fagot; torture by the Inquisition, the pillory, the thumb-screw, and the boot; and persecution by the pelting of rotten eggs and ducking in the horse-pond, have had their day and passed away. The forms have been changed, but not the spirit which prompts religious persecutions; jests and gibes, laughter and sneers, mockery and derision, raillery and satire, the enemies of the Christian religion have substituted for the brutal violence of other times. The minister of Jesus who boldly denounces sin, and wages an uncompromising war against the Baalism of the day, is still assailed with the opposition of Ahab and the rage of Jezebel. The fate of the prophets of God, whom the fierce Baalitic queen cut off in the days of Elijah, would now be the fate of faithful ministers of the cross wherever the gospel of Christ has not won a truce or conquered a peace. For the carnal mind is still enmity against God; and there are still fools who say in their hearts, "*There is no God.*" There are those who make light of the invitations of the gospel, or, refusing to have the man Christ Jesus to reign over them, join with the rabble, and cry, "*Away with him, away with him, crucify him!*"

Wherefore, every true ambassador of Christ may still have to suffer from the false charges of Ahabs and the persecutions of Jezebels. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master and the servant as his Lord. The blessed Christ was accused of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. And if, then, they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his own household! Wherefore, ministers of the Lord Jesus, be faithful to your Lord and Master; endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. If you suf-

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fer with him, you shall also be glorified together. Reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in you. And when the last battle is fought and the victory won, then shall your triumphant Lord, taking you by the hand, present you to his Father, and say, These are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto them a kingdom, as thou, Father, hast appointed unto me, that they may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CARMEL.

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THE charge of the wicked king has been answered by the counter-charge of the prophet. Elijah's indictment is true; Ahab knows it; Ahab feels it; and, therefore, he has no answer to make. Look now upon the prophet, and now upon the king. One would suppose Elijah is the justly offended sovereign, and Ahab the guilty, conscience-smitten subject. With all the majestic dignity of a crowned king, whose word is imperious law and must be obeyed, the prophet issues his orders to the crest-fallen monarch: "*Now, therefore, send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the grove four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.*"

What a command! How kingly is it spoken! "Gather to me all Israel!" This is a strange command from one who, for more than three years, has been hounded as a fugitive from justice, and been searched for in every nook and corner of Israel, and in all lands on both sides of the Jordan. "Gather to me all Israel!" It is a summons to Israel, from Dan on the north to Bethel on the south; from Dor on the Mediterranean to Ramoth-gilead beyond Jordan. It is a call to the ten tribes to meet in solemn assembly on Mount Carmel. It is a convocation of the whole kingdom—of the king and court, of the elders and rulers of the people, of the people themselves, and of the priests of Baal and Ashera. For the summons reads: "*Gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal*

*four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the grove [Ashera] four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table."* Was there ever such command? And was ever such command so implicitly obeyed? For the king questions not; he does not even ask the purpose of the gathering. He implicitly obeys; the royal mandate goes forth, summoning all Israel and the priests of Baal and Ashera to the place appointed by Elijah. "*So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel.*" Ahab's messengers hurry through the kingdom, for "the king's business required haste." Swift as the fiery cross which, in after years, summoned Clan Alpine's sons to Lanrick Mead, the king's heralds speed the call. It is heard first in the palace at Jezreel, and startles the courtiers of the king. Jezebel and the priests of Ashera hear it, and wonder what it means. The priests of Baal, in the temple which Ahab built for them in Samaria—the new metropolis which Omri founded—are astounded by the royal proclamation. Shechem, Shiloh, and Bethel hear it on the south; Hazor, Kedesh, and Dan on the north; Gezer, Dathan, and Megiddo on the west; Heshbon, Succoth, and Jabesh-gilead on the east. The king's summons is obeyed. Everywhere it is told that the long-sought Elijah has reappeared unto Ahab, and that at his instance the gathering is called. The prophet's name is in every mouth. It is associated with the drought which made all Israel a desert. It is coupled with the curse which the prophet pronounced on his first appearing to Ahab. It awakens the memories of Jehovah's past dealings with their fathers—his miraculous providences, his terrible judgments, and his appearances to prophets, priests, and kings. It recalls the rebellions of their sires, and their own idolatries. With mingled feelings they receive the summons. With fear and trembling they hear it, dreading lest the gathering presage new

calamities to Israel. For the worship of Baal and Ashera has not yet so blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts as to efface altogether the knowledge of the God of their fathers. Conscious of their wickedness and idolatries, they tremble lest Elijah's reëpearance mean heavier judgments upon the king and people. And yet with gladness they hear the call; even the most obdurate hoping it may result in removing the curse which was upon all the land. Among the people there were doubtless those who were Baalites, because it was the religion of the king and court, and who outwardly, through fear of Jezebel, worshiped the *Baalim*. It is probable some desired the convocation to issue in the discomfiture of Ahab and Jezebel, the overthrow of Baal and Ashera, the reëstablishment of the worship of Jehovah, and the restoration of the Mosaic ritual. It is certain there were a few scattered among the ten tribes who sighed and cried for the abominations of Israel. There were, perhaps, some—afterward increased to seven thousand—who had not bowed the knee to Baal or kissed his image. And besides, if they were still alive, there were the one hundred prophets hid in a cave. If the king's summons was not heard by them, it is highly probable that the good Obadiah secretly communicated to them the intelligence of the reëappearing of Elijah, and of the approaching gathering on Carmel. It may well be imagined how those who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and the one hundred prophets, received the welcome news. If the mouths of the faithful, through dread of Ahab and Jezebel, were restrained from laughter and their tongues from singing, they were no strangers to such deep joy as, years afterward, the captives felt by the rivers of Babylon, when the "Lord turned again the captivity of Zion." And if the prophets, up to this time, had escaped Jezebel's wrath, the hollow cave in which they were concealed was vocal with thanksgivings to God

for the preservation of Elijah, and with prayers that he would strengthen his prophet for the gathering on Carmel.

The appointed day has arrived. In time for the gathering, they who have been summoned set out for Carmel. Not one who could make the journey would fail to obey the royal mandate. The sons of Reuben\* went from the banks of the Arnon, and from the sheep-folds about Heshbon and Nebo; of Simeon, from the vineyards and olive-yards of Rimmon and Ramoth; of Gad, from the valley of the Jabbok, and the mountains of Gilead; of Manasseh, some from the fine pasture-lands and oaks of Bashan, and some from "the waters of Megiddo," and the lovely vale of Sharon; of Ephraim, from mounts Ebal and Gerizim; of Issachar, from the fertile plain of Jezreel and Mount Gilboa; of Zebulon, from the Sea of Chinnereth on the east to Carmel on the west; of Dan, some from the rich corn-fields and gardens about Ajalon and Ekron, and some from the ancient Laish, in the valley by Beth-rehob, bordering on dewy Hermon; of Naphtali, from the cedar-forests and beautiful woodlands of Lebanon; of Asher, from the regions bordering on Tyre and Sidon; and of Levi, from their cities scattered among the other tribes of the kingdom of Israel. The hunter left the wild-boar at bay in the thick woods of Lesser Hermon, or withdrew from the chase of the wild-roe on the mountains of Gilead. The firsherman forsook his nets in Chinnereth, or his fishing-boats on the shore of the great sea. The fowler quitted his snares, where he had been lying in wait for the wild-fowl which feed about the marshes that border Lake Merom. The shepherd resigned to the

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\* We have followed mainly Joshua's division of the land on the east and west of the Jordan. So many changes were afterward made, and so many different places were called by the same name, that it is difficult to determine with accuracy the respective tribal cities in the days of Elijah.

care of boys and girls the fleecy flocks that browse on the wooded slopes of the mountains of the Jordan, or in the valleys of Megiddo and Sharon. The artificer in iron dropped the heated metal unbeaten on the anvil; the armorer threw aside the "shields and spears and helmets and habergeons" which he had been repairing in the royal workshops of Samaria. The woodman abandoned the tall cedar half-felled on the eastern side of snow-capped Lebanon; and the vine-dresser left the vines unpruned and the fig and olive trees unwatered in the parched vineyards of Shechem and Tirzah. The priest of Baal turned away from the victim which he had just immolated on the altar of the god in his temple at Samaria; and the king and his royal courtiers set forth from the palace in Jezreel. The children of Israel, from the mountains and plains in the land promised to their fathers, crowded the thoroughfares and by-ways, all hurrying to the convocation about to assemble on Mount Carmel.

While the king and court, the priests of Baal, and the sons and daughters of Israel are hastening to Carmel, let us pause to take a view of the mount set apart for the gathering. If no other interest were thrown around it, the great convocation soon to assemble, and the astounding events about to occur on its summit, would make Carmel one of the most memorable places in all the earth. But while the present gathering is by far its chief, it is, as we shall see, not its only interest. It is a hallowed spot, and has been the witness—even when it has not been the immediate theater—of many important events in the history of the human race. To the pious Hebrew it is a place of almost equal veneration with mounts Zion and Horeb; and to the Christian, while it yields to Bethlehem and Calvary, and to all places hallowed by the personal ministry of Jesus, it is one of the most sacred of all in Holy Land that have been consecrated by the presence and glory of God.



Forty miles south of Tyre, and about twenty miles west of Nazareth, a bold promontory juts out into the Mediterranean, forming the Bay of Acre. From this promontory a mountain-ridge, whose highest elevation some estimate at seventeen hundred and fifty feet above the level of the sea, extends about sixteen miles to the south-east, suddenly ending where the mountains of Samaria begin. Its lower part—and yet not so near as not to leave room for a fertile plain between—inclines toward the Mediterranean, giving to the whole range somewhat a crescent-shaped appearance. This mountain-ridge is between the valley of Sharon on the west, and the valley of Jezreel on the east. To the whole ridge the name Carmel has been given. The Mount Carmel, the scene of Elijah's sacrifice, is a "flattened, cone-shaped" elevation on the east, near its northern extremity. The modern name of the mount is *Jebel Mar Elias*, or "The Mount of St. Elijah." The inner part of the mount, overlooking the brook Kishon and the plain of Jezreel, is the place to which Elijah summoned the children of Israel and the priests of Baal. The particular spot pointed out as the place of sacrifice is "a terrace of natural rock," and is called by the Turks *El Murakah*, or "The Sacrifice." It has been so thoroughly identified, it is believed, that no one questions its being the locality of Elijah's sacrificial altar.

The Old Testament affords abundant proof that Carmel was held by the Hebrews to be one of the most beautiful and picturesque of all the mountains of Palestine. The name itself suggests a pleasing and lovely image. It is either "the country of vineyards and gardens," or it is "the park," or "well-wooded place." It gave to the Hebrews some of their finest illustrations, and most striking metaphors. King Solomon, in an idyl, likened Carmel to the head of the beautiful Egyptian princess whom he had espoused. The shepherd prophet of Israel—the herdman

of Tekoa—forcibly depicted the blighting effects of the drouth which he foretold, by the mourning habitations of the shepherds and the withered top of Carmel. When Micah prefigured the future prosperity and increase of Israel in the better days to come, he represented Jehovah as a shepherd returning to Carmel, guiding with his crook, and, in the midst thereof, feeding the flock of his heritage which had dwelt solitarily in its wood. When Isaiah wished to give the most impressive illustration of the desolations which sin and idolatry bring upon a people, he wrote: "*The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.*" Carmel shaking off its fruits, and therefore stripped of its excellence and beauty, is with the prophet a synonym for a land forsaken and smitten of God on account of its idolatries. On the other hand, when the same rapt prophet, depicting the resplendent glories of the triumphant Messianic Church, likened it to the desert rejoicing and blossoming as the rose, he gave the finishing touch to his exquisite picture when he added, "*The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon.*" In "The Messiah," the bard, "rapt into future years," who celebrated the birth of the "auspicious Babe" in Bethlehem, thus introduces his advent:

*See, nature hastes her earliëst wreaths to bring,  
With all the incense of the breathing spring!  
See lofty Lebanon his head advance!  
See nodding forests on the mountain dance!  
See spicy clouds from lovely Sharon rise,  
And Carmel's flowery top perfume the skies!*

Nor, at this day, is Carmel without manifest evidence of its former glory. Travelers who have visited Holy Land, who have stood on Carmel, and taken in its beauties, tell us it is a place of surpassing loveliness. "There are few

travelers," says Kitto, "who do not forget as much of what they have seen as most people do of the books they have read." But Carmel, he says, "is a scene which he who has once beheld forgets no more."

Notwithstanding the present desolations of Palestine—about which we have written—arising from the curse of God upon the land for its wickedness, from ruinous tillage, an indolent people, and a bad government, Carmel possesses much of its pristine beauty. Its summit, travelers tell us, is crowned with perpetual verdure; various evergreens, the prickly oak, the pine, and the myrtle, are abundant. Olives and laurels adorn its sides. The lesser shrubs and aromatic herbs and flowers in profusion fill "the enlivening atmosphere" with their perfumes. They speak enthusiastically of its "rocky dells with deep jungles of copse," and of its "impenetrable brush-wood of oaks, and other evergreens, tenanted in the wilder parts by a profusion of game and wild animals." "Its shrubberies," Dean Stanley tells us, "are thicker than any others in Central Palestine." It is said to be "bright with hollyhocks, jasmine, and various flowering creepers." And all agree it is exceedingly well watered, and some speak in glowing terms of "the multitude of crystal brooks"—"from one of which issues the fountain of Elijah"—hurrying to the Kishon in the valley below.

The mountain, which is of oolite limestone, abounds in caves and grottoes. These were once the abode of prophets; Elijah, and Elisha after him, sometimes dwelt among them. A cave is pointed out as the abode of the Tishbite, and is called "The Cave of Elijah." In Carmel, after the death of her son, Elisha received the visit of the Shunammite. But not by the Hebrews alone was Carmel regarded with interest. It is said the philosopher Pythagoras sought retirement in its solitudes. Tacitus mentions an oracle on

its summit—neither statue nor temple, a venerated altar only—which Vespasian consulted. Its peculiar sanctity early attracted the Christian anchorite and hermit. The Carmelite monks had their origin there, and made it the seat of their order. According to the legends of these mendicant friars, Elijah himself was their founder; Jonah, Micah, and Obadiah were his first disciples. A wild legend avers that the wife of the governor of Ahab's house, "under an oath of chastity," received the veil from the hands of the Tishbite, and became the first abbess of a female chapter of the order. The Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ himself, it is claimed, were Carmelites, assuming their profession and adopting their dress. At least as early as 1185 Phocas, "a Greek monk of the isle of Patmòs," visited Carmel, and found upon it the ruins of a monastery. Amid these ruins Phocas saw "a small inclosure, a bell-tower, and a little church," which had been erected a short time previously by "an old gray-haired priest from Calabria," sent and commissioned by Elijah to build them. Whatever may be the truth of these monkish legends, there is no doubt that, early in the Middle Ages, convents and chapels began to appear on Carmel. When these were destroyed by the rude hands of Saracens and Turks, others in time were erected in their place. At the fountain of Elijah, in 1209, a convent was built in honor of St. Bocardus; in 1238 its monks were slain, and the neglected building fell into ruins. Another, erected in 1631, was dismantled in 1821 by Abdallah Pasha of St. Jean D'Acre, who transported its stones to his city and used them to build its walls. But as the building, a few years afterward, was restored by command of the Ottoman Porte, the Carmelite monks still have a convent and chapels there. The emblematic design of their order, as interpreted by themselves, asserts its connection with Carmel and the prophet Elijah. Its device is

a mountain, above which are three stars beneath a crown, out of which protrudes an arm with a drawn sword in its grip. That mountain is Mount Carmel; the stars are the virgin mother of Jesus; the crown denotes her supremacy; the arm is the arm of Elijah, and the sword represents the Tishbite's fiery zeal. A Roman pontiff, the Carmelites claim, as early as the seventh century, recognized the order; many others afterward, in various bulls and rescripts, bestowed upon it special immunities; and one of them Benedict XII., as late as 1725, allowed its different chapters to erect in St. Peter's, at Rome, a statue to Elijah, their common founder, and to put upon it the inscription: "*Universus Ordo Carmelitarum fundatori suo sancto Eliæ prophetæ erexit.*"

Nor were those whom we have mentioned the only proprietors of Carmel's sacred precincts. They have had a charm for Mohammedans as well as for Hebrews, pagans, and Christians. There the Turkish mosque lifted its tall minaret high above the neighboring sea and plain; and there the muezzin called to prayer the devout followers of the Moslem prophet. Various villages, which flourished when not laid waste by marauding Druses, have diversified the mountain. In some of these villages Americans attempted but failed to establish colonies. In a village named Haifa, on the northern end of the mountain, a company of German Protestant Dissenters calling themselves Templars—who made their first settlement in 1869—have succeeded in establishing themselves, and maintaining what seems to be a permanent footing. A heathen oracle, a Catholic convent, a Mohammedan mosque, and a Protestant chapel have appeared on the mount consecrated by the sacrifice of Elijah and the fire which came down from God out of heaven at Elijah's word.

All who have visited Carmel love to dwell on the enchanting scenes visible from its summit. There are no love-

lier views from any other mountain on earth. Let the reader suppose himself standing upon Carmel with his face toward the setting sun. Before him are the dark blue waters of the Mediterranean, bounded alone by the distant horizon. On the right, to the north-west, is the Bay of Acre, nestling close under the promontory of Carmel, where alone it affords a safe anchorage for ships; and on its northern shore, across the bay, appears the ancient Accho of the Phenicians, or the St. Jean D'Acre of the Knights of St. John. Farther north on the coast are the seats of ancient Tyre and Zarephath and Zidon. Turning now to the south and south-west, on the same coast, is Jaffa—the Japho of the Old Testament, the Joppa of the New, and the sea-port of Jerusalem, where dwelt Simon the tanner, on whose house-top Peter had his memorable trance. Just above Jaffa on the sea-shore is Cesarea, built by King Herod the Great, the metropolis of the Herodian kings, and the seat of Felix and Festus, the procurators of Judea in the days of St. Paul. Nearer to Carmel, and between it and the Mediterranean, is the lovely vale of Sharon, where grew the rose to which the bride of the amorous king in Canticles likened herself. Below Sharon, and south by east from Carmel, are the mountains of Samaria; to the south-east are mounts Gerizim and Ebal, on which, respectively, Joshua put the blessing and the curse; and beyond are the sacred mountains of Benjamin and Judah. Facing the east, and directly in front of Carmel, are Nazareth, immortalized by its association with the name of Jesus; Mount Tabor, where some say our Lord was transfigured; and the mountains of the Jordan. At Carmel's base, on the same side, runs the brook Kishon to the Bay of Acre; beyond, and between it and the Jordan, is the rich and vast plain of Esdraclon, the Greek name for the ancient valley of Jezreel, or plain of Megiddo. To the north-east are the

hills of Galilee sheltering the Sea of Chinnereth, or Lake Gennesaret; and beyond, visible in the clear atmosphere, are dewy Hermon and the tall peaks of Libanus and Antilibanus, and crowned with perpetual snows. All these and many other places in Holy Land, "dignified by wisdom, bravery, and virtue," may be seen from the heights of Carmel.

Carmel overlooks regions that were the theater of many great events of ancient or modern times. In the valley of Jezreel, at the brook Kishon, Barak and Deborah vanquished Sisera, captain of the hosts of Jabin. The same plain resounded with the battle-cry, "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*" when Gideon and his valiant three hundred slew the Midianites. Carmel looked on when the Philistines routed the Israelites the day King Saul, smitten by the archers, fell upon the sword of his armor-bearer in Mount Gilboa. To the south and the southwest it surveys or overlooks battle-fields famous in the wars of the Hebrews. It surveys or overlooks the scene of Joshua's victory the time he went up from Gilgal and smote the Amorites while the sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. It surveys or overlooks the field of David's triumph the day he heard "a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry-trees," and smote the Philistines from Gibeon to Gezer. It took in the memorable sieges which Samaria endured from the first under Ben-hadad to the last under Shalmaneser; and it was an eye-witness when that metropolis of Israel was taken, and saw the ten tribes while they were being led captive to Assyria. And in the distance—far to the southwest—in the regions made illustrious by the victories of Joshua and Samson, were Bethoron, where the valiant Judas Maccabeus defeated Apollonius; Adasa, where he triumphed over Nicanor; Bethsura, where he discomfited

Lysias; and the fatal Elcasa, where that great champion of Jewish independence was slain.

Long after the kingdoms of Judah and Israel ceased to exist, within the territory divided by Joshua among the twelve tribes many were the great battles and sieges that might have been witnessed from Carmel. Within that territory Alexander the Great, the Ptolemies, the Antiochi, Demetrius, the Maccabees, Pompey, Vespasian, Titus, Cestius Gallus, and many others—Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Arabian, Saracenian, Turkish, and Jewish—contended for lust and empire, or for country and freedom. In the Middle Ages it was the theater of great battles between the Christian and the Mohammedan, the European and the Asiatic; between the civilization of the West and the civilization of the East. The Crusaders, 1110, under Godfrey de Bouillon, Robert Duke of Normandy, Raymond Count of Toulouse, and Tancred the Flower of Chivalry, having taken Antioch and St. Jean D’Acre, marched by Carmel to Cesarea, and thence to the siege and conquest of Jerusalem. Carmel saw the heroic and successful defense of Tyre by Conrad of Montferrat when besieged by Saladin just after he wrested Jerusalem from the Franks. It looked on when St. Jean D’Acre, in 1187, was retaken by the great Moslem Caliph. It saw, in 1191, another siege of St. Jean D’Acre, when it was encompassed by the combined fleets and armies of Christian Europe. At anchor in the bay at its foot, Carmel beheld the allied battle-ships from Genoa, Pisa, and Venice; from France, Normandy, and the British Isles; and from Flanders, Friesland, and Denmark. In the armies pressing the siege by land, it looked down upon the crimson-hued silken oriflamme of St. Denys and the red-cross banner of St. George. It saw the politic Philip Augustus of France and the impetuous, lion-hearted Richard Plantagenet of England mar-



shaling and leading their crusading hosts to rescue St. Jean D'Acre from its garrison of Turks and Saracens. It heard Saladin's trumpet-call when he summoned to the aid of its brave Moslem defenders the followers of the false prophet from Egypt, from Syria, from Arabia, and from the Oriental provinces between the Tigris and the Indus. Carmel saw St. Jean D'Acre again in the hands of the Christians, but not until nine battles had been fought, and one hundred thousand of its Christian besiegers alone had perished within its sight. It witnessed the forced march of the victorious Crusaders from St. Jean D'Acre to Ascalon—"a great and perpetual battle of eleven days"—and the defeat of Saladin beneath its walls by King Richard of England. It saw, in 1291, St. Jean D'Acre again beleaguered and taken by the Ottoman. It looked on, in 1799, when Bonaparte, fresh from the battle of the Pyramids in Egypt, invaded Palestine, marched from Gaza to Jaffa, and from there to the siege of St. Jean D'Acre. It witnessed, during its siege, Napoleon's splendid victory at Mount Tabor over the Moslem tribes of the mountains of Naplouse under Abdallah Pasha of Damascus. It surveyed the brave and successful defense of St. Jean D'Acre by its Mohammedan garrison and the allied British fleet under Sir Sidney Smith. It witnessed Bonaparte's failure before, and his retreat from, St. Jean D'Acre, what time he hurried to Aboukir, to Paris, to the eighteenth of Brumaire, to the Consulate, to Marengo, and to Empire. Carmel again saw St. Jean D'Acre besieged and taken. It was an eye-witness of its siege when Ibrahim Pasha took it in 1832; and it was a looker-on when, in 1840, it was reduced to ruins by the bombardment of a British fleet under Admiral Stopford, rescued from the Egyptians, and delivered over to the Sultan, the friend and ally of England. It saw the ancient Accho of the Phenicians, Ptolemais of the Egyptians. *Colo-*

*via Claudii Cæsaris* of the Romans, and St. Jean D'Acre of the Knights Hospitalers of St. John in the hands of Phenicians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Egyptians, Jews, Turks, Saracens, Greeks, Romans, English, French, and others; and it witnessed the slaughter of the many thousands who, for twenty-five centuries, successively perished in its defense or siege. No other place on the face of the globe has witnessed so many battles and sieges as the heights of old Carmel. But among them all not one is to be compared, in the importance and grandeur of its results, with the contest which took place on its summit between the prophet Elijah and the priests of Baal.

Such is Carmel; such are its environs, and such its associations. Upon its summit, on its eastern declivity, Ahab, the priests of Baal, and the children of Israel are assembled to meet Elijah. All who had been summoned are there except the priests of Ashera who eat at Jezebel's table. Jezebel also is absent. If she was included in the summons, she has disobeyed the command of her king and husband. The queen has not only staid away, but she has kept back the priests of her tutelary Zidonian goddess. In the respective places assigned to them, the king, the court, the priests of Baal, and the children of Israel, with anxious expectancy, await the appearing of the prophet. Where is Elijah? what has become of him since the day he gave his commands to Ahab? where did he go? where is he now? No one can tell how many days intervened between Elijah's second interview with Ahab and the present gathering. Neither can any one say how and where the prophet spent the interval. In all probability he went to Carmel and hid himself in one of its caves. It is estimated that of them there are at least one thousand. And in this estimate are not included the wine-presses hewn out of the solid rock, giving evidence of the rich vintages from vine-

yards that once flourished on its sides. Mountain-caves have often been objects of superstitious awe and fruitful sources of legendary tradition and chronicle. From a cave in Mount Cynthus at Delos, and from another in Mount Parnassus at Delphi, issued respectively the Delian and Delphic oracles of the Grecian Apollo. At Delphi the Amphictyonic Council met, consulted the god in his temple, and, receiving his answer from the aditum to the cave whence arose the inspiring vapor that gave divination to his prophetess, decided questions of peace and war. The Corycian cave in Parnassus was the abode of the Muses, and the seat of poetry and song; and so vast were its dimensions that, during a Persian invasion, it hid securely within its walls all the inhabitants of Delphi. And in a cave at Cumæ dwelt the Sibyl whom Æneas consulted before his descent to hell. In Old Testament days caves were used for habitation, for burial, and for refuge. Lot and his two daughters dwelt in a cave in the mountain near Zoar; Abraham buried Sarah in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron; and to the cave of Adullam David fled for refuge from King Saul. The caves of Carmel afforded such safe hiding-places that they defied pursuit, and became symbols of security. How they were regarded as places of refuge may be learned from the passage in Amos: "Though they [the enemies of God] dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up into heaven, thence will I bring them down; and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out hence." Among the taunts Isaiah mentions wherewith Sennacherib, in the days of Hezekiah, defied the Holy One of Israel, was the proud boast that he would come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; that he would cast down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof; that he would enter into the

height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel. In one of its caves it is likely Elijah has been concealed since he gave the command to Ahab to gather to him unto Carmel all Israel and the priests of Baal and Ashera. From his concealment the Tishbite again, like an apparition, bursts upon Ahab, and stands in the presence of the astonished multitude that had been waiting his appearing and anxiously inquiring for him. All eyes are turned upon Elijah. In breathless silence they fix their gaze upon the man with the shaggy hair, sheep-skin mantle, and leathern girdle. The Tishbite, that he may be seen and heard by the last man in the vast assembly, stands upon some eminence, lifts up his voice like a trumpet, and cries: "*How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.*" The startled people are dumb. Not a word is heard in response. Afraid of Ahab, no man in the assembly dares to say that the Lord is God; awed by the presence of Elijah, who has given such signal proof that he is a prophet of the Lord God of their fathers, no one ventures to say that Baal is God. "*And the people answered not a word.*" The silence is awful. Nor is it broken until it is broken by Elijah. The bold Tishbite, undaunted by the silence of the people, whether that silence resulted from fear, from apathy or indifference, breaks up the silence by a haughty and defiant challenge to the priests of Baal: "*Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.*" The prophet has delivered his

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challenge; he has thrown down his gauntlet. Will the priests of Baal accept the challenge? will they dare to take up Elijah's gauntlet? They must, they must; there is no escape. The contest proposed is so fair that it cannot be declined without disgrace to the priests of Baal and the acknowledgment of their defeat. If Baal's priests had any purpose to decline the combat, they had no way of escape when all the people answered the prophet of God, and said, "*It is well spoken.*"

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE GREAT QUESTION.

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THE question Elijah put to the children of Israel on Carmel deserves a separate chapter. It was most pertinent then; it is as pertinent at this day as in the days of the Tishbite. It is a question that must be answered, sooner or later, by all having a revelation from God and still halting between two opinions. Upon its decision depend the momentous issues of life and death, of heaven and hell.

*“How long halt ye between two opinions?”* is not the literal rendering. It is an explanation or interpretation of the metaphor. Some apply the figure to birds, restless, moving from one branch to another, and not long continuing on either. They who adopt this as the true meaning render thus: “How long leap ye upon two branches?” or, “How long hop ye from twig to twig?” Others take it from the action of one lame of limb, moving now on this side and now on that, irregular, unsteady, limping, hobbling, and hence translate, “How long limp ye upon two hams?” But whatever the literal rendering, the prophet’s meaning is evident, and our Authorized Version gives the true sense. How long halt ye—hesitate—between two opinions—thoughts, considerations—is an explanation conveying the meaning so clearly that it cannot be misunderstood.

To halt—“Anglo-Saxon healtian, Danish halte, . . . German halten”—is “to hold one’s self from proceeding, . . . to stop in walking or marching; to stop with lameness; to be lame; to limp; to stand in doubt to proceed, or what to do; to hesitate.” To halt between two opinions is to be in-

decisive, to doubt which is correct, and hence to hesitate how to act. All action, if any, is uncertain, irregular, and inconsistent. Now the one opinion controls, now the other. And when these opinions are embodied, and represent two parties, the halting is now on the side of this party, and now on the side of that; now he is on neither side, and now he trims between them. He is a creature of circumstances, having no courage of his convictions. Under one set of circumstances he is with the one party, and acts with it; under other conditions he acts with the other. But when the incentives and persuasives appear to be evenly balanced, he either proclaims a neutrality or seeks so to distribute his influence and favors as to be claimed by both. When at a loss how to decide, he aims so to serve, and be accounted the friend of both, as to secure the respective honors and rewards and escape the opprobrium and penalty. This is fickleness and cowardice; it is insincerity and hypocrisy. The halting, limping man, if he be a man of action at all, being double-minded, is "*unstable in all his ways.*"

But this is not all. Halting may produce inaction; it may end in stolid indifference, or remorseless apathy. This is likely to be the final issue when long continued. Trimmers like Halifax become careless Gallios. Halting Hebrews, in the days of Elijah, may have become as indifferent about the contest between Jehovah and Baal as was the Roman deputy of Achaia about the "question of words and names" which divided Christians and Jews at the time the latter brought Paul to the judgment-seat of Cæsar's proconsul. But it may be said that the ascription of indifference to Gallio does him great injustice; for he was the most courteous and cultured heathen of his day. He may have been: "the sweet Gallio" may have deserved all his brother, the illustrious Seneca, beautifully and affectionately said of him. And yet, for all that, he was indifferent—yea, more

than indifferent—to the religious convictions of the Christian and Jewish subjects of his province: “he drove them from the judgment-seat.” Chesterfield likewise was courteous and cultured; his manners Samuel Johnson called “exquisitely elegant;” and yet the father of Philip Stanhope had no religious convictions of his own; nor did he concern himself about those of others, unless it was to ridicule and deride them. The truth is—pardoning the seeming parenthesis—men who have no settled convictions become tired of acting. They become annoyed by opinions that have no hold upon their convictions; they weary in the employ of those to whom they render an unwilling and heartless service. Besides, insincerity, or hypocrisy, is hard to be kept up; it requires too great a tax of effort to sustain it. The mask is quickly and gladly thrown off the moment it is neither profitable to keep it up nor dangerous to lay it aside. Inaction is freedom from care; indifference is peace; apathy is rest. It matters not whether Jehovah or Baal is God. It is of no concern whether Elijah or Ahab is right. It is a thing of no importance, or of very little, which side prevails. Satisfied with itself, indifference wishes not to be disturbed. At ease in Zion, it is at best lukewarm; it says, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” knowing not that it is “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Nor have we yet told all. None may become so blind as the halting. No matter how opposite certain opinions may be; they may be as wide as the poles apart, or as difficult to mix as oil and water, and yet the moral sense may be so weakened by habitual halting as to confound them, or result in the vain attempt to unite and harmonize them. What color-blindness is to vision—so confusing colors that they cannot be distinguished—indecision and vacillation are to that faculty of the human soul whose office is to discrim-



inate between right and wrong. As prismatic colors are confusedly blended by the color-blind, so the distinctions between right and wrong may be utterly confounded by the habitually halting. Hence the vain effort to effect a compromise between Jehovah and Baal; between God and Mammon. And hence among the multitudes on Carmel to meet Elijah there were those who sought by comprehension to combine the Mosaic and the Baalitic ritual. The dual-god, whom they set up for themselves, they tried to represent by appropriate symbols, and worship under some such name as Jehovah-Baal.

It is probable that all classes represented by the halting were among the assembled thousands on Carmel. Elijah's aim was to bring them all to an immediate and final decision. His purpose was to incite the wavering; to inflame the lukewarm; to awaken the indifferent; to arouse the apathetic; and to alarm those who had joined the worship of Baal to the worship of Jehovah. The prophet stood squarely on the first and second commandments of the Lord God of Israel: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." *"If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."* It was thus Elijah put it to the halting Israelites on Carmel. His meaning could not be mistaken. "There is," in effect, he said to Israel, "but one only living and true God; and that only living and true God is the Lord God, who brought your fathers out of the land of

Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Him only shalt thou serve; him only shalt thou worship. For the Lord Jehovah is a jealous God, and will not share his honor with another. And as the Lord God is a Spirit, and not to be likened to any thing made by men's hands, all image-worship is an abomination in his sight, and all image-worshippers are idolaters. Equally idolatrous are they who worship the creature—any thing God has made in the earth beneath, or in the heaven above. Hear, O Israel, in whose fathers 'the Lord had a delight to love them,' what was commanded by his servant Moses, 'The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' Was it not the Lord God, O Israel, who 'brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, vineyards and olive-trees, which thou plantedst not?' Did not your fathers go 'down to Egypt with threescore and ten persons,' and now hath not the Lord thy God 'made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude?' Did not the Lord God command your fathers, and their children after them, to burn with fire the graven images of the gods of the heathen nations whom he drove out before thee, and whose lands he gave thee for an inheritance? Did he not command them, saying, 'Thou shalt not desire the silver nor gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God?' And did he not say, 'Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it; but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing?' Hast thou not taken the graven images of heathen gods into thine house? is not the cursed thing in thy dwelling? and will you change

Jehovah for Baal? 'hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods?' and will you change 'your glory for that which doth not profit?' was not the Lord the glory of your fathers? was he not their praise? why then is he not yours? Were not his promises to them, and to their seed after them? and do you not owe to him life, and breath, and country, and all things? will the heathen hold on to their gods, which are yet no gods, and not change them for others? and will you change the Self-existent, the Eternal, the Almighty, the Holy One of Israel, who made the earth and the heavens, for the gods of the heathen which are no gods, but dumb and insensate idols made with hands? But is Baal God? hath he, and not the Lord God of Israel, made the earth and the heavens? is *he* self-existent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, almighty, eternal? then follow him; then serve and worship him, and him alone. For there is but one God. If Baal be that one God, then worship Jehovah no more. Do not render unto Baal a divided service. Be one thing or the other. Away with your indecision! It is a loathing to the Lord God of your fathers. Why halt ye between two opinions? You must decide one way, or the other. You must either give up Baal, or you must give up Jehovah. You cannot serve both. Israel's God admits no compromise with Baal, or comprehension of him. Choose, then, your God; and let the decision be final. 'And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell,' or the gods of the Zidonians, the idolatrous allies of your idolatrous king and queen."

Thus the bold and zealous Tishbite allowed no compromise; he demanded an immediate decision—the renouncement of Jehovah, or the renouncement of Baal. Then and

there on Carmel by his servant Elijah, as before at Shechem by his servant Joshua, and as afterward in the land of the Chaldeans by his servant Ezekiel, the Lord God challenged his people to serve him alone, or to abandon his service forever. "As for you, O house of Israel," thus he said in Ezekiel, "go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also if ye will not hearken unto me; but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols." For the Lord God will not always bear with a divided service; to him it is an abomination. And as it was in Joshua's, in Elijah's, and in Ezekiel's day, so it is now. Sooner or later, he brings the halting to a final decision; sooner or later, he will, by his ambassadors, put to the halting of this day the same question which, by his servant Elijah, he put to assembled Israel on Carmel: "*How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.*" But before we push this question, let me remind the reader that Elijah's question was not put to the priests of Baal, or to any who worshiped him alone, but to the halting of Israel, who were in doubt, either as to which was the true God; or if both Jehovah and Baal were Gods, to which superior worship was due; or whether there might not be such a comprehension of both—such a compromise between them—that both might be equally worshiped.

When considering the Baalism of Ahab, we said that practically the same contest is going on now which was going on in his day. As it was in time past when God spoke unto the fathers by the prophets, so it is in these last days wherein God speaks to us by his Son. As there were those, in the olden time, who changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, and the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator; as there were those who either halted between the

worship of God and the worship of Baal or sought a compromise between them, so now, at this present time, there are those who either set up some strange god in their hearts, and give to him the worship which is due to the Lord God alone, or try to serve both. There are those who reject God's only-begotten Son, and refuse to have the man Christ Jesus to reign over them; and there are those who either make light of salvation by faith in Christ, excuse themselves for not following him, render to him a heartless and lukewarm service, or are indifferent to his claims. These are the Baalites of to-day; for all the forms of direct or indirect opposition to Christ are but modifications of Israel's Baalism in the times of Elijah.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world according to prophecy and promise. An angel from God told to his virgin mother his miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost, and his consequent birth; a multitude of the heavenly host, when he was born in Bethlehem, sung, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." His name was called JESUS; for he saves his people from their sins. "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH US." This is the Shiloh which was to come, and unto whom the gathering of the people was to be; this is he whom Isaiah called WONDERFUL, COUNSELOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE. This is the brightness of the Father's glory; the express image, the counterpart, the exact resemblance, of his essence, or essential being. This is the heir of all things. This is he by whom the worlds were made; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power. This is he of whom, and to whom, the Father said:

“Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever ; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.” This is the Desire of nations, the Redeemer of the world, and the Saviour of men. This is he upon whom the Spirit of the Lord descended like a dove, and of whom a voice from heaven proclaimed, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This is he who, in the presence of Moses and Elijah from heaven, and of Peter and James and John from earth, was transfigured on “the mountain apart,” and whose face did shine as the sun, and whose raiment was white as the light. This is the Seed of the woman, the Son of man, the Root out of Jesse, the Son of David. This is the Son of God and Son of man, God manifest in the flesh, the Word of God, the Word made flesh, the Word that was in the beginning, the Word that was with God, and the Word that was God. This is the Light of the world, the bright and Morning-star, the Day-spring from on high, and the Sun of righteousness. This is he of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write. This is he who opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, unloosed the tongue of the dumb, cleansed the leprous, cast out devils, raised the dead, and preached the gospel to the poor. This is the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; who bore our sins in his own body on the tree; who gave his soul an offering for sin; who died, the just for the unjust; who by the grace of God tasted death for every man; who is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; who made a perfect satisfaction and atonement for sin; who made it possible for God to be just and yet justify the ungodly; who is made to us of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; who was crucified, dead, and buried; who rose from the dead, and by his resurrection was declared to be the Son of God with power; who ascended on high leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men; who

is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour; who is the great and merciful High-priest; whose name is the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved; to whom is given a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; who is King of kings, Lord of lords, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last; who is Judge of quick and dead, and shall come the second time without sin unto salvation; and who must reign until all enemies are put under his feet. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Whosoever believeth on him shall be saved. And as he continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood, he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. God was in him, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto ambassadors the ministry of reconciliation. His blood cleanseth from all sin; and for this purpose he was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. Salvation—salvation from sin, from its condemnation, from its guilt, from its indwelling, from its being, from its power—salvation from death, from the grave, from hell—is only by and through him. “Repent ye, therefore, and believe the gospel.” “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” But “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” And, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

“*What think ye of Christ?*” This has been the great question ever since he cried, “*It is finished!*” God the Father, who so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten

Son to die for it, has a contention with all who do not believe on his name, or render to him a divided service. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." And as to those who are neutral, or give to Christ a divided or lukewarm service, the Son of God himself hath said: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."

*What think ye of Christ?* God the Father, wherever the story of the cross is told, wherever Christ crucified and risen is preached, calls upon all men to answer the question. And wherever the gospel is proclaimed the Holy Ghost attends it, convincing the world of sin, of righteous-



ness, and of judgment. The Holy Ghost has been faithful to his mission; for let God be true though every man be found a liar. "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*" What power is there in this saying any more than in the saying—if it should be said of either—that Confucius, Buddha, or Mohammed came into the world to save sinners? There is divine truth and divine power in the saying when it is affirmed of Christ Jesus; there is neither any truth nor any power whatever in it when affirmed of any other. To the truth and to the power of the saying—"*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*"—the Almighty Father set his seal. For the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation; and Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The preaching of Christ crucified was attended by signs following. Indued with power from on high by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the apostles of Christ with great power bore witness to his resurrection. The preaching of the cross changed men's hearts, and transformed their lives. It brought on earth peace, good-will toward men. It proved itself worthy of all acceptation. Believed and embraced, millions have testified to the truth of the doctrine of him that was crucified. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The predicted effects of the preaching of Christ crucified attended it when and wherever it was preached. The gospel of the Son of God produced conviction in all; and it was a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, to all convicted by it. The awakened conscience, the guilty fears, the forced confession—"Of a truth this was the Son of God"—even in them who did not yield to their convictions; and the peace, the joy in the Holy Ghost, the purity in the heart, the victory over self and sin, and the triumph over fears of death and

the grave in all who were persuaded of it, embraced it, and acted upon it, alike attested its divinity and demonstrated its supernatural power. "*We believe, and therefore speak,*" was its propulsive force in all who experienced it and proclaimed it. And wherever proclaimed, aroused to a sense of sin, and alarmed by its convincing, inherent, and supernatural truth, men either fought against its convictions, resisted its persuasions, and sought peace to the guilty conscience by plunging still farther into sin—thereby so blunting and searing it as to make it past feeling, and to believe even a lie—or by delay and procrastination lulled themselves into indifference and apathy; or, yielding to its claims, experienced its forgiving, transforming, sin-cleansing, life-giving, peace-assuring, hope-inspiring, and love-pervading power, and became themselves witnesses for Jesus and the resurrection, exponents of its teachings, and proclaimers of its efficacy to sanctify and to save. And thus Almighty God, by the effects of the gospel of his only-begotten Son, both upon them that are saved and upon them that are lost, demonstrated its divine truth and saving power. "*This is my beloved Son: hear ye him,*" is the Father's mandate from his throne in heaven. The Father who gave his only-begotten Son proclaims: Believe on my Son, and be saved; believe not and be damned. "*Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*"

What think ye of Christ? "*For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*" And, "*As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.*" Why are ye halting, seeing that the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, and hath given him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man? "*Marvel not at*

*this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*" Why halt ye between two opinions? why hesitate, knowing that *"we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad?"* Will you wait until the Lord Jesus is *"revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?"* Will you wait till the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him? will you delay until he shall sit upon the throne of his glory? until before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats? will you wait until the King shall set the sheep on his right-hand, and the goats on his left? until he shall say to them on his right-hand, *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?"* and until he shall say to them on his left, *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels?"*

What think ye of Christ? whose Son is he? Answer these questions, and answer now. How long halt ye between two opinions? Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. If Christ be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, follow him; if not, then follow the Baal of your own choice. But will you hesitate to follow Christ, seeing that *"the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father?"* Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Christ; for *"he that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which sent him; and whosoever denieth the Son, the*

*same hath not the Father.*" How long halt ye? Confess him now; for "*whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*" "*And he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*" What think ye of Christ? "*Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?*" Who is "*antichrist, but he that denieth the Father and the Son?*" How long halt ye, seeing that "*he who hath seen the Son hath seen the Father?*" "*No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*" Why hesitate, since "*all things are delivered unto the Son of the Father?*" The Son is head over all things; he governs the universe; his dominion is from everlasting to everlasting. And such is his transcendent nature; such the great mystery of the union of the divine and the human in him—a union by which God and man meet, and in which both are represented—a union without which man's fallen nature could not be renewed and made a partaker of the divine—that "*no man knoweth the Son but the Father.*" What think ye of Christ? Exalted as may be the loftiest finite conception of Christ, it is infinitely below the true conception of EMMANUEL—GOD WITH US—"the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." And what think ye of the Father? "*Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son.*" Neither angels nor archangels, neither cherubim nor seraphim, know the Infinite Father; the Son alone knows him. And all that any one can know of him is what the Son reveals to him. How long, then, halt ye between two opinions? why not take Christ, and take him now? why delay, seeing "*no man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him?*" "*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.*" Hear this, ye halting: "*If any man love not the Lord*

*Jesus Christ, let him be ANATHEMA, MARANATHA."* "Knowing, therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Wherefore, accept Christ, and accept him now! Halt no more! "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

There is a crisis in the life of every one who, having heard the gospel, rejects it, or puts off the day of its acceptance. There is a sin which a man dare not commit lest it be his last, and fill up the measure of his unbelief and iniquity. There is a limit beyond which delay is fatal, and must end in the loss of the soul. Every lost soul sinned his last sin and had his last offer—his last chance—of salvation. The final issue was the same, whatever the degree of guilt or measure of punishment, whether it arose from enmity and rebellion or from neglect and indifference, persevered in to the end of life. All alike missed heaven; all alike went to the only other place beyond the grave—the place prepared for the devil and his angels. It makes no difference how the crisis comes or when it comes—it comes, and no man knows when it will come. If the good man of the house had known on what night, and at what hour of the night, the thief was coming, he would have watched to prevent the spoiling of his goods. And it makes no difference whether God permits one to live on after he has filled up the measure of his unbelief and iniquity, or cuts him off the moment the crisis is past, and hales him before his tribunal. The results are the same. The man is lost, and he is lost forever. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and he is not saved.

Sure we are that somewhere and in some way God calls the atheist, the infidel, the rebellious, the incorrigible, and the halting to make a final decision; and sure we are that *that* decision, if it be against God and his Son, is ratified

in heaven—judgment is entered up, and the sentence is irreversible. “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.” “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” There is a limit to the forbearance of Almighty God; there is a somewhere when even the vine-dresser will say of the barren fig-tree spared by his intercessions, on which he long waited, and which he faithfully tried to make fruitful, “Cut it down!” God’s forbearance leadeth to repentance—that is, such is his gracious design. But what if his goodness and long-suffering are made the occasion for further sin or further procrastination? Are not such treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God? Has not God declared that his Spirit shall not always strive with man? What mean these solemn warnings: “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,” and “Quench not the Spirit?” and is not the following more solemn still: “But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he has turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them?” The Holy Spirit, instead of being a friend, a guide, a guard, an ally, a helper, is turned into an enemy, standing armed in the way, and fighting against us, like cherubim with flaming sword guarding the entrance to the tree of life. What means the answer of the bridegroom from within, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not?” what mean the words, “And the door was shut?” and these, “None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper?” and these, “So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my

rest?" and these, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord?" What difference does it make, as to final destiny, if one has quenched the Spirit forever, whether God ends probation by cutting it short in death, or by permitting the sentenced to live longer upon the earth? In either case probation is ended, and the chance for salvation clean gone forever.

What think ye of Christ? How long halt ye between two opinions? Ye fools, who say in your hearts, "There is no God;" ye infidel Baalites of this day; ye who deny the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, or refuse to have him to reign over you—I do not care by what name men call you, or by what name you call yourselves—I do not ask you, How long halt ye between two opinions? For this question, I again remind you, was not put by Elijah to the priests of Baal on Carmel, but to halting Israel. But I do say to you, The God that answereth by fire is the only true God, and Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, is the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. To you I say, "*God out of Christ is a consuming fire.*" And ye incorrigibly wicked, know that for your sins God will bring you into judgment. When ye sinned, because God kept silence, ye thought he was altogether such a one as yourselves; but he will reprove you, and set all your sins in order before your eyes. And ye halting, hesitating, lukewarm, arouse from indifference and inaction! How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, serve him; if Jesus Christ be the only-begotten Son of God, follow him. For God who confounded the Baalites on Carmel, when he answered by fire, will utterly destroy the Baalites of this day, and their works, and all who are seduced by them, unless they repent and believe the gospel.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE CONTEST.

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ELIJAH'S challenge is accepted; the contest opens between Jehovah and Baal, between the prophet of the Lord God of Israel and the priests of the Zidonian sun-god. Humanly speaking, the odds seem to be against the Tishbite. For he, even he only, remains a prophet of the Lord. All the others have been slain by Jezebel; if any survive, they are hid away in a cave where Obadiah concealed them. If Obadiah is on Carmel, he and Elijah's servant are the only ones present on whom the prophet can knowingly rely. On the other side are Ahab, the officers of State, the royal guard, the fawning courtiers, the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal in their splendid vestments, and the apostate, the idolatrous, or the halting thousands of the children of Israel. The test which Elijah has proposed is a bold one. It is an appeal by fire: "*The God that answereth by fire, let him be God.*" So reads the challenge, and so it is accepted. Wherefore, if Baal be God, the advantage is with him and his priests. If Baal be the sun-god, the test is by the very element over which he presides. And what more auspicious time for such a contest? For three years and a half an unclouded sun, without intermission, has held undisputed sway over all the regions of Samaria. Carmel's top has been withered by his fiery rays; his scorching heat has dried up its wood and exhaled its moisture. If Baal had a chance to answer by fire, he had it then; a more propitious moment could not have been chosen. No wonder the people, in response to the



Tishbite's challenge, cried, "*It is well spoken!*" and no wonder the priests of Baal saw no way to evade it. The issue was upon them; decline it, and their pretensions are exposed, and their priestly influence gone. They might hope by some magic, by sleight-of-hand, by practiced skill in the use of pyrotechnics, to deceive the simple and the unsuspecting. But suppose they had no hope of success through any tricks of legerdemain; suppose there was no chance, with concealed combustibles cunningly handled, to kindle a fire by artificial means; and suppose the Tishbite's conditions of the contest effectually provided against deception and fraud—there was still that which encouraged them to abide the trial. What if they failed to call down the fire from heaven which was to consume the sacrifice? They believed that Elijah also would fail. And if Elijah failed, the victory—even though they themselves should be unsuccessful—would be practically with them. For was not the prophet the challenger? Want of success on his part would be fatal; and even if they succeeded not, his failure would be the ruin of himself and cause, and a signal triumph to them. When the trial was over, and neither party succeeded, their priestly cunning would be sure to say that they had claimed for themselves and their god no such power; that the contest was forced upon them against their will by the clamors of the people; and that they had consented to it, knowing that the prophet would fail, and that the result would silence his bold pretensions, and prove that he had undertaken what he could not perform.

But the prophet of Israel's God knows that he cannot fail. He knows in whose name and by whose authority he made the challenge; he knows that all power is his in heaven and on the earth. The Creator of the sun, the great luminary of day and prime source of heat, is Elijah's God. Wherefore, the prophet, though alone, is undaunted in the

presence of the king and court, the priests of Baal and the thousands of idolatrous Israel; for he is Jehovah's ambassador and representative, and speaks and acts by his commands. Besides, too, the contest is Jehovah's, and not Elijah's; and Jehovah has given to his servant the pledge that he will do according to his servant's word. Hence, the prophet stands on Carmel placid and serene in all the conscious majesty of truth, but firm as the rocks and bold as the eagles of his native mountains. Assured of success, he awaits the preparation and issue.

The bullocks for the altar have been brought, and are awaiting the sacrificial knife. "*And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.*" The choice of bullocks made, the priests proceed, according to the rites of their sun-god, to prepare for the sacrifice. What kind of altar they made ready for themselves the record does not say. But the victim is slain and dressed and placed upon the wood. And when all things are ready for the invocation, they begin to call upon their god. Cries of "O Baal, hear us!" or "O Baal, answer us!" proceed from four hundred and fifty priestly throats. The multitudes look on in eager expectancy or doubt, as belief or unbelief in Baal and his priests sways the assembly. Old Carmel's grottoes echo to the loud and repeated invocations, but no voice of the sun-god is heard in response. It was morning when the sacrifice was ready and the invocations began. They have been kept up unceasingly until it is noon; "*but there was no voice, nor any that answered.*" And when the sun was at his zenith, and shot his rays vertically down, they leaped upon their altar. All the while Elijah was a silent and quiet observer of the scene before him. But when high noon appeared, and the sun's rays were directest and hot-

test; when in their eagerness the priests of Baal, as the margin reads, leaped up and down at the altar, the prophet of God could keep silence no longer. "*And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.*" The Tishbite's keen irony goads them to frenzy. They raise their voices to the loudest pitch. They "*cut themselves, after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them,*" mingling their own blood with the blood of the slain victim, in the hope that their god would be propitious. But midday is past; and they kept up their invocations "*until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice;*" but "*there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.*" Baal's priests have failed; there is no answer by fire, or answer of any kind to their prolonged and impassioned appeals to the sun-god. Elijah's turn comes next. If he succeeds, the priests of Baal are discomfited and disgraced in the audience of the people.

When the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice is come—three hours after the sun passed his meridian—the prophet of the Lord God of Israel makes ready for his sacrifice. "*And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me.*" This is asked that they may the better see all that he is about to do—rather, the desire that they should be near him is the drawing of a heart full of tenderness and love for the misguided people whom he is yearning to win back to their allegiance to Israel's God. "*And all the people came near unto him.*" They draw near the prophet, some because their hearts are already drawn to him, some through fear, some through curiosity, but all with intense interest in the final issue of the contest.

The test which the prophet has chosen is not an unheard-of thing in Israel. The Israelites on Carmel have not so

forgotten the dealings of Jehovah with their fathers and with others as not to recall his marvelous interpositions by fire. Nor are the impressions and convictions which such interpositions made upon themselves so effaced by their sinful deeds and idolatrous practices as not to awaken in many the profoundest awe. For the Lord God, who often answered by fire in the past, is about to be invoked by his prophet Elijah to answer in the same manner on Carmel. Had he not, at that prophet's word, so shut up the heavens for three years and six months that neither dew nor rain had fallen in all Samaria? And was not this known to all the people assembled on the mount? Will not the Lord God now answer the prophet's word, and send the fire? The remembrance that fire had been the instrument of Jehovah's most signal judgments upon the wicked, as well as the manifestations of his most signal interpositions in behalf of the righteous, fills them with fearful apprehensions, lest an offended God now send it upon them as a punishment for their wicked rebellions and abominable idolatries. The pious Hebrew believed that when Abel offered upon the altar the slain victim for his sins God showed his acceptance of the penitential offering by fire from heaven which consumed the sacrifice. A smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces of Abraham's sacrifice what time the patriarch asked whereby he might know that he should inherit the land the Lord God promised to him and his seed. A flame of fire out of the midst of a bush appeared to Moses in Midian when Jehovah called him to deliver his Hebrew brethren out of their bondage in Goshen. "There came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat," when Moses and Aaron dedicated the tabernacle of the congregation. A pillar of fire from evening till morning rested upon the tabernacle during all the journey in

the wilderness. The Lord descended upon Sinai in fire when Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God. The angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar at the time the Lord confirmed to Manoaah and his wife the promise of a son. And at the dedication of the temple on Mount Zion, when Solomon made an end of praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices. The Lord God successively witnessed to altar, tabernacle, and temple with fire from himself out of heaven. Nor less signally were his judgments attended by fire. Fire from the Lord out of heaven consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, wicked cities of the plain, in the days of Abraham. The fire of God fell upon the thieving Achan in the valley of Achor. Fire from heaven devoured Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire before the Lord. And there came out a fire from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense in the rebellion of Korah. These miraculous interpositions by fire in blessings on the obedient or in judgments on the rebellious are known to the people who, at his bidding, draw near to Elijah. When, then, the prophet, who withheld the dew and the rain, appealed to the Lord God of their fathers to answer by fire, the most idolatrous and the most presumptuous Israelite on Carmel, whatever his seeming indifference, must have owned to secret misgivings and foreboding fears.

The first act of Elijah is to prepare an altar. Upon the mount there is an altar of Jehovah that is broken down. This altar, consecrated by past sacrifices to the God of Israel, the prophet selects and proceeds to repair. "*And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name.*" With these twelve stones here builds the altar in the name of the Lord. The twelve tribes are

now divided into two separate and rival kingdoms—the kingdom of Judah and Benjamin and the kingdom of Israel. The prophet belongs to the latter, and he stands in the presence of its king and people. But the Tishbite is more than a subject of the Israelitish king; he is a son of Jacob, and a joint-heir to the promises made to him and to his seed after him. He knows that these promises belong to all the sons of Jacob, and that therefore they are Judah's and Benjamin's equally with those whose descendants compose the kingdom of Israel. His Hebrew heart is pained by the causes which dismembered the kingdom of David; but his prophetic ken sees the good time coming when Shiloh, gathering all the children of Jacob in one, shall sit upon the reunited and undivided throne of his father David. Wherefore, in token of such reunion, and of the final triumph of Messias, he builds his altar with twelve stones, equaling the number of the sons of Jacob, of the twelve apocalyptic thrones in heaven, and the number of the gates in the holy Jerusalem that is to descend out of heaven from God.

The prophet next "*made a trench about the altar, as great as would hold two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.*" With what deliberation and particularity the prophet prepares the altar! There is no haste; all things are done according to the command of his God. And how carefully he guards against every charge of deception and fraud! In the presence of all, the water is poured on abundantly, filling the trench, so that no man

may say, when the fire comes and consumes the sacrifice, that the prophet resorted to any trick. For no fire can come from beneath an altar thus prepared. If fire comes and consumes the offering, it must come from above; it must be no fire of earth or from earth; it must come down from God out of heaven.

All things are ready. The hour has come when Elijah must prove that the Lord God of Israel is God alone, and that he is his prophet. The sun is fast descending to his nightly bath in the waters of the Mediterranean; and no help can Elijah have from his direct rays. While the priests of Baal were making their trial the sun was at his zenith; their altar was exposed to his vertical beams, nor had any water been poured upon it or about it. Its materials were as dry as more than three years' absence of dew and rain could dry them; as parched as a fervid sun of equal duration could parch them. But Elijah essays the trial by fire with sacrifice and wood, and altar and all its surroundings, as wet as four barrels of water three times poured on can wet them. At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah, with bared head, with uplifted hands, and in reverential awe, prays to the Lord God of Israel. Brief and simple is the prayer he offers. The calm dignity, the devout attitude, and the pleading tones of the prophet of God are in strange contrast with the hurried pomp, the ostentatious parade, the frenzied manner, and the vociferous cries of the priests of Baal. "*Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel,*" thus Elijah prays, "*let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.*" And then, raising his voice in earnest supplication for the deluded people before him, he entreats: "*Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back*

again." Such is the Tishbite's prayer! No sooner is it offered than it is heard in heaven by heaven's Eternal King; and no sooner is it heard than it is answered. Quicker than the winged thunderbolt leaps from the storm-cloud overcharged with electricity, vertically down the fire from the Lord fell upon Elijah's altar. In the same moment it "*consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.*" The God that answereth by fire answers the call of his prophet on Carmel. The people see it and fall on their faces, subdued by the presence and power of Elijah's God. In dumb amazement and silent awe they remain prostrate where they have fallen. And then simultaneously as one man they spring to their feet and rend the heavens with the shout, "THE LORD, *he is the God!* THE LORD, *he is the God!*" Angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim around the throne catch up the sounds from earth, and heaven's eternal arches ring with the same triumphant burst. "THE LORD, *he is the God!* THE LORD, *he is the God!*" resounds on earth and in heaven, and "shakes the trembling gates of hell." Ahab and his idolatrous court and his foreign parasites, and the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, are silenced and discomfited. For THE LORD, he is the God; and Elijah the Tishbite is his prophet.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE ANSWER BY FIRE.

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THE Carmel of the Old Testament suggests the Calvary of the New; and Elijah's sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ. Whatever may have been the origin of sacrifice, it is probable that it was penal, expiatory, and vicarious from the day "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." But however this may be—into the controversy we will not enter—such was its manifest character in the Mosaic ritual. Leviticus, interpreted by the Epistle to the Hebrews, makes this so plain that no one will question it, unless that expository epistle is excluded from the Sacred Canon. Abel's offering and the sin-offering of the law were types of Christ—the Lamb of God, "slain from the foundation of the world." The types were fulfilled "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," who "bore the sins of many" by his "one sacrifice for sin forever." Hence "there is no more offering for sin." Once for all, Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man; once for all, he "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification;" once for all, he opened a fountain "to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness." He suffered "death upon the cross for our redemption;" and he "made there, by his oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." He was himself both priest and victim. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

Continuing ever, and having "an unchangeable priesthood," "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." He was the spotless Lamb of God who, by his own blood, "entered in once into the holy place," and obtained for us eternal redemption. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" "Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead," his sacrifice has been accepted. And as God answered Elijah's sacrifice on Carmel by fire, by fire also he answered the sacrifice of his only-begotten Son on Calvary.

When the voice of the Baptist, who came to prepare the way of the Lord and to make his paths straight, was heard in the wilderness, saying, "*Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,*" he said to the multitudes that flocked to his baptism, "*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*" Does the Baptist speak of two baptisms, or of one and the same? Is the baptism of fire distinct from that of the Holy Ghost? There is no doubt about whom he speaks; he speaks of Christ, the promised Messiah. And there is no question that, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, he means specifically the converting, renewing, purifying, and sanctifying power of the Spirit, given to all who trust in and look to Christ alone, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, for pardon and holiness and heaven. Is the "baptism of fire" the same as this? is it a part of the self-same thing? or is it something different? Is not the baptism of the Holy Ghost,

to which the Baptist alludes, a blessing, and only a blessing? and is not the "baptism of fire" a curse, and only a curse? is not the one a reward, and the other a punishment? is not the first salvation from sin and death and hell? and is not the second condemnation, and the loss of the soul forever? is not this "baptism of fire" the "fiery indignation," the "consuming fire" that shall utterly destroy all who reject the Lamb of God, and his only sacrifice for sin?

We are aware of the different interpretations put upon this "baptism of fire" by the early fathers of the Church, and by others since their day. These interpretations may be reduced to three: *first*, a baptism of suffering and persecution; *second*, of punishment and judgment; *third*, of spiritual cleansing and power—fire being the appropriate symbol of each. Now as the last of these is fully embraced in the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the inference seems clear that by the "baptism of fire" something else is meant. For the saying of the Baptist is modified and explained by his preceding words: "*Now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire;*" and by his added words, "*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*" Both baptisms were needed to "thoroughly purge his floor." By the one—the baptism of the Holy Ghost—the wheat is gathered into the garner; by the other—the "baptism of fire"—the chaff, like the unfruitful tree felled by the ax, is burned up with fire unquenchable. The one is remedial; the other is punitive. The one saves; the other destroys. And both baptisms accompany the ministry of Him who was mightier far than the Baptist; and by the sanctions of both is that ministry enforced. For all power is Christ's in heaven and on the earth. He can reward, and he can punish;

he can save, and he can destroy. His gospel is the savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. It is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe; to the unbeliever it is eternal death. While the baptism of the Holy Ghost renews, purifies, sanctifies the believer in Jesus, and fits him for the inheritance of the saints in light, the "baptism of fire" is the unquenchable fire prepared for the devil and his angels, that shall forever eat the flesh of the finally wicked in the bottomless pit.

In confirmation of the meaning we have ascribed to the "baptism of fire" foretold by the Baptist, we remind the reader that while Matthew and Luke read, "*He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire,*" Mark and John omit the latter clause. Nor is this all. Matthew and Luke, as we have seen, qualify and expound what they say by the preceding words: "*And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire;*" and by the added words, "*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*"

These sayings, a very slight transposition of one or two words excepted, both in the original Greek and in our version, are identically the same in Matthew and Luke, but omitted altogether in Mark and John. Why do the two latter omit the "baptism of fire," and the burning up of the unfruitful tree and the chaff with fire unquenchable? Is it not because Mark and John confine themselves to the spiritual effects of the baptism of the Holy Ghost that follow the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, while Matthew and Luke speak not only of them, but of the baptism of punishment and wrath, which he shall send upon all who reject his only sacrifice for sin?

And does it not throw light upon our interpretation that St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles—the same who, with St. Matthew, makes the Baptist speak of the baptism of fire—represents our blessed Lord, when about to ascend up into heaven, as saying, "*For John truly baptized you with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence?*" is not our Lord's omission of the words "and with fire" significant? "*Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be indued with power from on high,*" was the command. "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost*"—not the Holy Ghost and fire—"is come upon you," was the promise of its fulfillment. Not a word, either in the command or in the words which tell in what the power from on high was to consist, about a "baptism of fire," that was to qualify them to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

But was not the baptism of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost a "baptism of fire?" Before we answer, let us have the brief and only record before us. Here is all that is said: "*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*" The above is the whole record. Neither in it nor elsewhere is there a single word about a "baptism of fire." There was a baptism of the Holy Ghost, and there were tongues "like as of fire"—tongues resembling, having the appearance of, in the form of, fire. The phrase "tongue of fire" occurs but once in all the Scriptures. In Isaiah it is said, "*Therefore as the fire*"—Hebrew, "*tongue of fire*"—"devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff,"

etc. There it is a bold and striking metaphor. The long, pointed flame is not inaptly called a "tongue of fire." It was real fire in the shape of a tongue. As "the tongue of fire" devoureth the stubble, and its flame consumeth the chaff, so shall the "root" of the oppressor and lovers of strong drink, and of those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, sin as it were with a cart rope, and call evil good and good evil, "be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust." So the "baptism of fire" foretold by the Baptist burns up with unquenchable flame the unfruitful tree and the chaff—the generation of vipers, the extortionate publicans, and the rapacious soldiers. And it is not a little remarkable that both Mark and John, who omit the "baptism of fire" from the Baptist's prophecy, omit also his terrible denunciations of the wicked Pharisees, Sadducees, publicans, and soldiers who came to his baptism.

On Pentecost there was no more fire than wind. There was a sound, but it was not the sound of wind. There was a loud noise, and it was like the noise of a rushing mighty wind; but there was no tempest. And it came not as the wind comes, for it came from heaven vertically down. Neither was there any shaking of the house in which the apostles were sitting such as is produced by a great wind. "But 'from heaven' directly downward," says Mr. William Arthur, the eloquent author of the "Tongue of Fire," "fell a sound, without shape, or step, or movement to account for it—a sound as if a mighty wind were rushing, not along the ground, but straight from on high, like showers in a dead calm. Yet no wind stirred. As to motion, the air of the room was still as death; as to sound, it was awful as a hurricane." Beyond the sound, there was perfect stillness in that upper chamber; there was no rustling of any thing within or without. The noise without the wind, the stillness amid the noise, made the whole the more

phenomenal, the more supernatural and miraculous. And as there was no wind, though the sound which filled the house was as of a rushing mighty wind, so there was no fire, though cloven tongues appeared "like as of fire"—not tongues of fire, as in Isaiah, but tongues having the appearance of fire. What the sound was, what the appearance was, no inspired man, above what is said in the record, has told us. The apostles and the evangelist who records the phenomenon could only tell it as it seemed to them. They heard the sound, they saw the cloven tongues, and they have told us to what they were likened. The sound was like the sound of wind; the cloven tongues were like fire. The wind and the fire they employ as symbols, as figures of speech. This was all they could say, and it was all they did say. But whatever happened to the apostles on Pentecost, there was a baptism of the Holy Ghost. It indued with power from on high. It acted like fire—it burned up the dross; it refined the gold. It cleansed the heart; it purified the affections; it sanctified soul, body, and spirit; it enlightened the understanding; it quickened the conscience; it strengthened memory; it kindled courage; it increased faith; it brightened hope. It perfected love to God and man; it assimilated the whole man to God; it consecrated him to his service. It imparted the gift of tongues; and it gave to speech supernatural power to convince and to confound, to comfort and to save.

We have given, as we think, the true explanation of that baptism of fire about which the Baptist spoke; and yet the baptism of the Spirit on Pentecost has not inappropriately been called "the baptism of fire," and the cloven tongues "tongues of fire." And this is said though the tongues were said to be not "tongues of fire," but "tongues like as of fire"—*γλῶσσαι ὡσεὶ πυρὸς*—and though, strictly speaking, neither "baptisms of fire" nor "tongues of fire" are

scriptural terms. And yet the symbol, as applied both to the baptism of the Spirit and to the cloven tongues, is quite appropriate, because fire is a symbol of the illuminating, cleansing, and refining power of the one, and of the convincing, burning, eloquent speech of the other, as well as of punishment and wrath. In its cleansing and refining sense we are to take "the baptism of fire" on Pentecost, the answer which God gave to the sacrifice of his only-begotten Son on Calvary, "the tongues of fire" denoting the supernatural eloquence and special gift of those indued with power from on high by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the cloven tongues signifying the universal diffusion of the gospel of the Son of God, and its adaptation to all men. And as Carmel's sacrifice was far less important than Calvary's, so its answer by fire was far less important than the answer by fire which followed the death and resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord God of Israel, who answered by fire and confounded the Baalites on Carmel, proving that he alone was God, and that Elijah was his prophet, confounded every kind of Baalism on Pentecost, demonstrating by "the baptism of fire" and by the cloven "tongues of fire" that Christ is the only-begotten Son, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his substance, and therefore very and eternal God. The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, and sent on Pentecost according to the promise of both, forever declared that the same Jesus which was crucified is both Lord and Christ. "The tongues of fire" which were then given, proclaiming to all, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," burned into the heart and conscience the conviction that Christ crucified, risen from the dead, and ascended up into heaven is the Saviour of all men, and the



only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. And as he that answereth by fire is God, Jesus Christ, who answered by the "baptism of fire" and the cloven "tongues of fire" on Pentecost, and who will answer with fire unquenchable when he comes to judge the world and punish the wicked, is God equally with the Father. Pentecost proclaimed to angels and men, to heaven and earth, "*He is the God! he is the God!*" Wherefore, believe on the Son of God, and be saved; believe not, and be damned. Refuse not, turn not away from him that speaketh from heaven: "*For our God is a consuming fire*"—a fire purifying and saving the believer by burning up all his dross, but a fire preying on and destroying the unbeliever with eternal flame.

Wherefore, the answer by fire on Carmel suggests the coming of Christ in flaming fire to judge the world. "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.*" "*The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" "*Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*" It suggests also the final conflagration—the day of the Lord, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; when the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. And it suggests the final triumph of Christ over all his enemies—when Satan and every worshiper of Baal shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. The God who answered by fire on Carmel will answer by the judgment

of eternal fires. And as old Carmel, when God answered Elijah by fire, echoed to the shout, "*He is the God! he is the God!*" even so Lord Jesus, come quickly, and hasten, O hasten, the day when all in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, shall shout, willingly or unwillingly, "*Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!*" and, amid lightnings and thunderings and voices, crown thee "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

And now, O blessed Lord Jesus! help again to press the question Elijah put to assembled Israel on Carmel, and attend it in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. "*How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.*" Is not he that answereth by fire God? Why, then, hesitate between Baal and Christ? Reader, how is it with you? are you still halting? if you have not decided, if you are still hesitating between God and Baal, between Christ and Mammon, it may now be the crisis with you. It may be the time when God calls *you* to make a final decision. This moment may be the hinge on which turns your destiny for weal or woe, for the joys of heaven or the fires of hell. Decide for God and Christ, and heaven will be yours—forever yours; decide for Mammon and the world, and hell may be your everlasting portion.

It was a crisis with Felix and Drusilla when St. Paul reasoned before them of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come. The precious opportunity was lost to Felix forever; a convenient season never came. It is true that afterward he sent for Paul, but it was to hear no more about the faith in Christ. "He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him; wherefore he sent for him the oftener and communed with him." And what became of Drusilla, the Jewish princess, and the lawful wife of Azizus, King of Emesa,

who had apostatized from the religion of her fathers, and left the chaste marriage-bed of her wedded husband, to become the paramour of a profligate man, a corrupt judge, and a debauched heathen ruler? Drusilla and her son, the child of her and Felix's guilt, perished in an eruption of Vesuvius, whose flames of burning lava were no mean representation of those judgment-fires so graphically depicted by the apostle when he reasoned before her and her companion in sin of righteousness, temperance, and a coming judgment. It was a crisis with King Herod Agrippa when St. Paul proved by the prophets and by his own miraculous conversion that Jesus was the Christ. The crisis passed; though almost persuaded, Agrippa was lost, and, when too late, bewailed:

*“‘Almost persuaded,’ harvest is past!  
‘Almost persuaded,’ doom comes at last!  
‘Almost’ cannot avail;  
‘Almost’ is but to fail!  
Sad, sad, that bitter wail:  
‘Almost,’ but lost!”*

And it was a crisis with the young man in the Gospel who came to Christ, saying: “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” “Go thy way,” was the reply, “sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.” The opportunity was lost! “He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.” He gave up God for Mammon, Christ for the world, an apostleship and the crown of life for the wages of sin—eternal death. The close of his life on earth was well portrayed by the fate of the rich man, whose grounds brought forth so plentifully that he determined to pull down his old barns and build greater. The very moment he congratulated himself that at last he had enough,

it was said to him: "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Fitting end to one whose whole portion was in this world! And his future in the world beyond the grave was well depicted by that of the rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, to whom, when he cried, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame," it was answered: "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Such is the sure and sad doom of all who let the crisis pass and are lost.

Look on that picture, and then on this: "Now as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him." And now look on this: "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him." These were men who seized upon the crisis, became apostles, and witnesses of Jesus and the resurrection. Having continued with him in his temptations, he appointed unto them a kingdom, even as the Father appointed unto him; they now eat and drink at his table in his kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus

of Nazareth passeth by a certain place; a blind man, when told of it, raises the plaintive cry, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus calls him, and opens his blind eyes. Multitudes on Pentecost cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In one day three thousand gladly received the word, and on the same day were added to the Church. Paul preaches at a *proseucha* by a river-side near Philippi; Lydia's heart is opened, and she is saved. The jailer in Philippi at midnight cries, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," was the answer, "and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The jailer seized upon the crisis; he believed; and he and all his house were baptized on that very night.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Reader, Christ calleth thee! Listen to his gracious invitation; it is addressed to you: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." And hear his precious promise: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." And he is nigh thee! "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

In a sermon on "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation," the preacher was pressing the thought that then and there the truly penitent might

find present salvation. One who had been seeking peace, but had not found it, arose and came into the altar rejoicing. Radiant with the deep joy which she felt, she faced the multitude; and, with burning, convincing, and yet modest speech, she told that she was a happy witness to the truth, Now is the accepted time, and now the day of salvation; for Jesus, while the minister was preaching, had spoken peace to her troubled heart. That minister ended his sermon, saying: "God is preaching; it is unnecessary to say more." Numbers were awakened, sought the Lord, and found him. At another time and place, while that preacher was preaching from the same text, he was enforcing the danger of putting off the day of our return to God. He was showing at what imminent peril the gospel message is rejected or neglected; for God's last offer of pardon comes at some time, and that moment might be a crisis to some who heard him. A young man—while the minister was still preaching—arose, and, in deepest agony, ran to the pulpit. Throwing himself on his knees before it, he cried: "Lost! lost! lost!" But he was not lost; he found peace, and is now an active and pious official member in the Church of Christ, on his way to heaven, and trying to persuade others to go with him. In one of the leading Church papers of the day, its editor told that, on another occasion, as many as sixty persons dated their awakening and conversion mainly to a sermon from the same text and by the same preacher. With voice and pen that preacher, as an ambassador for God, would entreat, beseech, persuade you in Christ's stead "be ye reconciled to God," for "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." And he could tell of other like precious experiences. He could tell how an infidel and skeptic gave up his infidelity and skepticism, surrendered himself to God, and was converted, and made unspeakably happy, all

in the same moment, and while the minister was speaking of the power which attended the baptism of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost and afterward. He could tell how a penitent received the Divine assurance of sins forgiven, for Jesus' sake, while the one was in the very act of administering, and the other was in the very act of receiving by faith, the wine in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. They who know that preacher know that he has been preaching for thirty years, and that never has he put in print what he believes the Lord may have wrought through him. Perhaps he has been at fault in this; and if so, he ought to pray God to forgive him. Equally, we believe, would he ask the Divine forgiveness if silence ought never to have been broken. What has been said of that preacher has been told with the earnest prayer that it may be made of God a blessing to some hesitating or penitent soul that may perchance read these words. And as for believers in Jesus who have already experienced the joy of pardoned sins, may they find comfort and blessing in what has been written. May the lukewarm be stirred up; may the indifferent be aroused; may they who have not the witness of the Spirit have that blessed testimony in their hearts to their present acceptance with God through faith in Christ; and may they that are hungering and thirsting after righteousness be filled with all the fullness of God! May every believer in Jesus and him crucified experience all that that precious word "salvation" means! May every minister of the Lord Jesus be indued with power from on high; and may every one preach with heart of love, with tongue of fire, and in demonstration of the Spirit and of power! May all speak the word of God with boldness, with great power bear witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and may great grace be upon them all! And may God so baptize the Church with the Holy Ghost that all who believe may

be of one heart and of one soul, and no man say that aught of the things which he possesses is his own! Lord Jesus, whenever, wherever, and by whomsoever thy gospel is preached, let him by whom it is preached realize thy latest promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And may the God that answereth by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and that will answer at the end of the world by consuming and unquenchable fire, cleanse, purify, and refine all the saints that are in Christ Jesus; convert and comfort the humble penitent; arouse the halting; and confound the infidel Baalites who will not have the man Christ Jesus to reign over them. Amen. O thou that answereth by fire, hear us as we sing with one whose lips, like Isaiah's, were touched with a live coal from thine altar:

*O that in me the sacred fire  
Might now begin to glow!  
Burn up the dross of base desire,  
And make the mountains flow!*

*O that it now from heaven might fall,  
And all my sins consume!  
Come, Holy Ghost, for thee I call;  
Spirit of burning, come!*

*Refining fire, go through my heart;  
Illuminate my soul;  
Scatter thy life through every part,  
And sanctify the whole.*

*No longer, then, my heart shall mourn;  
While, purified by grace,  
I only for his glory burn,  
And always see his face.*



## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE KISHON.

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**E**LIJAH has triumphed. The God that answereth by fire is God, and Elijah is his prophet. The Tishbite orders the arrest of the priests of Baal, and the people obey. *“And Elijah said unto them, Let not one of them escape. And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.”*

One may well imagine the consternation of Baal's priests when the fire came down from heaven upon Elijah's sacrifice, and all the people rent the air with the shout, *“THE LORD, he is the God! THE LORD, he is the God!”* Fallen their proud crests; blanched their cheeks; downcast their looks; trembled their hearts. Crouching with fear, and huddled together like timid partridges, they quailed before the devouring fire of Israel's God. They read their doom in the prophet's fiery eye; they hear it pronounced in tones which unmistakably indicate the Tishbite's iron will and inflexible purpose. The sun-god, whom they served, and on whom they called in their extremity of trial, neither answered by fire nor came to their rescue when the people, at Elijah's bidding, turned against and laid violent hands upon them. Succumbing to their fate, and knowing that resistance and rescue were vain, they were led by the people down from the amphitheater on Carmel to the Kishon in the valley below.

But where was the king who worshiped the god whom they served, and who had them under his kingly protection? Did he interpose no resistance to the prophet's doom? These

questions we shall presently answer. But meanwhile Baal's priests must die; there is no power in Israel's king to pluck them out of Elijah's hands. For the sovereign and absolute Lord God of Israel had affixed the death-penalty to their crime; and Elijah was his authorized minister in Israel to pronounce his judgment, and execute his sentence. The sentence was Jehovah's, and not Elijah's. Jehovah was supreme lawgiver in Israel, and its government was a pure theocracy. He made its laws; its rulers were his ministers to see that they were faithfully obeyed, and promptly executed according to their letter and spirit. Whether these rulers were patriarchs, prophets, judges, or kings, they were all God's ministers; they all held their positions by his authority, and were his vicegerents. While it is true that all rulers on earth are subordinate and accountable to him as the supreme Lord and Governor of the universe, yet this was true, in a very special sense, of all who exercised authority over his chosen people. Jehovah was King in Israel. He was a ruler of the Hebrews in a sense in which he was not the ruler of any other people. The Hebrew commonwealth which he set up always had the higher law to govern it. That higher law was expressed in ordinances and statutes, which the Lord God of Israel himself had made, or in his will as revealed, from time to time, by those who were commissioned, qualified, and sent to declare it. Not even when he permitted the Israelites to choose a king for themselves did Jehovah abrogate the laws which he made and promulgated for their government, or abdicate his supreme authority over them. At no time were the Hebrews absolved from their allegiance to the God of Israel. Both the king and the people were bound to take his laws as the only rule both of private and official conduct. If any human law contravened these, it was null and void *ab initio*. Comparing the contravening law of a

refractory Israelitish ruler with enactments of legislative bodies that are directly contrary to the fundamental law and written compact, it was unconstitutional and revolutionary. And he who enacted it was wicked, rebellious, and traitorous, and was exposed to divine wrath and punishment. Obedience to it was forbidden by the heaviest penalties. That men must obey God rather than man was a provision in the fundamental law of the Hebrew constitution that admitted of no possible exception. And while this was of universal it was of special application, and was enforced by the severest sanctions whenever contrary legislation compromised, in anywise, the divinity of Jehovah, or in any degree interfered with his prescribed ritual. To refuse supreme worship to Jehovah, to worship idols, or to introduce the worship of any other god, was high treason of the most obnoxious and impious character. The introducers of idol-worship, of whatever kind, were transgressors of deepest guilt. The teachers or priests who corrupted the people, and drew them after themselves away from God, were to be punished with the heaviest penalties. The prophet who presumed to speak in the name of Israel's God a word which God had not commanded him to speak, or that spoke in the name of any other god, was to suffer death. If a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, should arise and advise to go after other gods and serve them, God's commands were to punish with death that prophet or dreamer of dreams, because he had spoken to turn his people away from the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt. More than this: If a brother, a son, a daughter, or a wife, should entice one to go and serve other gods, even the nearest relatives were forbidden to pity, to spare, or to conceal the offender, and were commanded to be the first to put the guilty one to death. More explicit still, and more severe, were the laws against the foreign idolaters who

should attempt to seduce his people with their abominations. The chosen people were commanded to utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which they possessed served their gods, to overthrow their altars, break their pillars, burn their groves with fire, hew down the graven images of their gods, to blot out their names, and to exterminate the idolatrous priests and people.

From Jehovah's judgments there was no appeal but by submission, penitence, and prayer. His sovereignty was absolute, his right indefeasible, and his power omnipotent. He could set up one ruler, and he could pull down another. Whenever a ruler of his chosen people, who derived all his authority from him, and held it at his absolute will, dared to change or modify his commands, or failed to execute them, Jehovah, the absolute King of the Hebrews, either removed his refractory vicegerent and put another in his place; or, if he continued him in power, sent his servants, the prophets, to do what such disobedient and rebellious ruler failed to do. Ahab, in this instance, was that disobedient and rebellious ruler. He not only did evil in the sight of the Lord above all the kings before him, but he introduced into God's own kingdom of Israel the gods of the Zidonians, and gave to them supreme worship. This was high treason against Israel's supreme God and King. Wherefore Ahab deserved to die, if ever a traitor to king and country deserved death. If Jehovah's judgments and wrath had fallen on him, Israel's God and King would have meted out to him only his just and merited desert. And yet he spares the guilty king, the arch-traitor, the idolatrous ruler, but punishes the foreign priests who misled and seduced him.

These things we have written because there are those who have foolishly charged Elijah with cruelty. When the prophet condemned the priests of Baal to death, he but

pronounced the judgment of God upon idolaters taken *in flagrante delicto*. The sentence which he pronounced was a judicial sentence; as God's high-sheriff of the realm he executed it. If any charge of cruelty is to be brought, let it be against the Lord God of Israel, and not against his minister and servant Elijah. Boldly charge it upon the Holy One of Israel, but let his prophet go free and uncondemned.

Down from the place of trial by fire the priests are led to the brook Kishon. The Kishon is "that ancient river, the river Kishon," which Deborah celebrated in the triumphant ode that prophetess of the Most High God sung in commemoration of the overthrow of Sisera and the hosts of Jabin, King of Caanan. Swollen by the winter rains which then rushed down the sides of Carmel, the Kishon swept away into the bay at the base of the mountain promontory the dead bodies of multitudes attempting to cross these "waters of Megiddo." Then the Kishon was a fierce torrent, bearing all things on its surging tide; now it is a shallow stream, affected by the drought, and nearly dried up, except where it approaches the bay of the great sea, into which it empties itself. It was perhaps from thence—from the tides which flow into it from the Mediterranean—Elijah procured the water which he poured upon his altar of sacrifice; and it was there the priests were led, and there they were slain. "*And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*" But it is not probable that the prophet's own hands slew Baal's priests. They were seized by his order; he headed the party that arrested and conducted them; and he looked on and saw that his sentence was faithfully executed. But as these things were done by his command and under his direction, they are said to have been done by himself: "*Qui facit per alium, facit per se.*" Wherefore, speaking according to this

universally recognized principle, that what one does by another he does himself, it may be said that Elijah brought the priests to the brook and slew them there, though his own hands may not have struck a single blow. However this may be, it was Elijah's act; and it was done by the command of Elijah's God. At the brook they were all slain; not one of them escaped. Suffering the just penalty of the laws they had broken, their blood dyed the "waters of Megiddo," and mingled with the waters of the great sea.

The priests of Baal slain, the sentence of Israel's God executed by his prophet Elijah, who will bring a charge of cruelty against Israel's supreme and sovereign King? who art thou that repliest against God? who will dispute the prerogative of Israel's God and King in his own royal kingdom of Samaria? who will call in question the wisdom of his laws, the righteousness of his government, the justice of his administration? Yea, when these are rightly understood, who will doubt his goodness, his tender mercy, his long-suffering, and his forbearance?

Given that he is the only living and true God, the creator of heaven and earth. Grant that he chose the Hebrews as a people for himself; that, by his miraculous providences, he preserved and multiplied them until they became a mighty nation; that he formed them into a commonwealth, and governed them by laws written with his own fingers on tables of stone and handed down to them amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai; that they entered into a mutual covenant, and ratified it by the most solemn pledges and sanctions; that, by that compact, he undertook to be their God, to establish them in the land he promised to their fathers, and to defend them against all their enemies; that, by the same agreement, they promised to have him alone for their God and King, to obey his laws, to worship him and him only, to make to themselves no im-

age or likeness of any thing in heaven, in earth, or in the waters under the earth; to bow the knee to no idol; to root out and utterly to exterminate all idolaters and all idol-worship, and to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength. Such is a brief epitome of the solemn league and covenant between the contracting parties! How infinite the condescension of Almighty God, to admit his creature man into a compact with himself! Given also that God was faithful to his covenant; that the compact was wickedly broken again and again by his chosen people; that they trampled on his laws, killed his prophets, dug down his altars, made to themselves images of false gods, worshiped idols, introduced and served other gods, and tried to dethrone altogether their covenant Lord and King. Given again that these things were capital offenses, punished by such forms of death as their supreme God and King prescribed, and of which they had sufficient knowledge and warning. Grant his long-suffering and forbearance; that he bore long and patiently with them; that he tried by all means, when they sinned, forsook him, rebelled against him, and served other gods, to win them back to allegiance and duty; that he was always pitiful and merciful, ready to forgive the penitent, to blot out their transgressions, and to remember them no more. Given all these things—and the one-thousandth part has not been told—and who so presumptuous as to say that God's judgments were too severe, either toward his wicked, rebellious, and stiff-necked people, or toward the profane and impious heathen teachers who corrupted them, caused them to sin, to commit whoredoms, to engage in idolatrous and obscene worship, and drew their hearts away from loving and serving the God of their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? The marvel is not that God sometimes visited them with severe judgments,

but that he permitted the incorrigibly wicked, rebellious, and idolatrous to live at all. The wonder is that he spared them for the sake of their fathers, and for the sake of the few faithful ones in Israel who sighed and cried because of its abominations. The wonder is that the wicked and rebellious were not all cut off and exterminated, and that he had not left only those who were true to him and his worship. O the depth of the exceeding riches of his grace! Past finding out his forbearance, long-suffering, and tender mercy! For all his dealings with his people Israel show that he was worthy of the name which he proclaimed to Moses when he descended in the cloud, and stood with him in the mount: "THE LORD, THE LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

And as the Lord God was then, so is he now. How is it that he bears so long with sinners, and with such sinners? How is it that he gave his only-begotten Son to die for sinners? How is it that Jesus, the innocent One, died for the guilty? How is it that he suffered the just for the unjust? How is it that his latest breath on the cross was a prayer for the scribes and Pharisees and rulers of the people who dragged him to Pilate's judgment-seat; for the Roman governor who knowingly sent an innocent man to death; for those who mocked and derided and smote him; for those who nailed him to the accursed tree; and for him who gave the cruel spear-thrust in his side? How is it that the great God bears so long with those who take his holy name in vain, profane his Sabbaths, make light of his offers of mercy, reject his Son and crucify him afresh, do despite unto the Spirit of grace, and seek to dethrone himself from the government of the universe? How is it that he is so long-suffering with the Baalites of this day? How is it that he is so patient with the teachers of science falsely so called, who exalt the Ego above every thing that is called God



and is worshiped? How is it that he sends the early and the latter rains, the sunshine and the dew, upon the fields of the very men who deny his personality and providence, and ascribe to blind chance, or to evolution, to molecules, to protoplasm, the universe itself? How is it that they are so often in health, honored, exalted, enriched, while believers in God and his only-begotten Son are so often afflicted, forgotten, forsaken, despised, and poor? Answer these questions, and a thousand more that might be asked, ye who, when heavy judgments fall upon the wicked, the impious, and the infidel, are so swift to charge God with cruelty! No one who believes that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, ever charges God with cruelty; no, not even when the heaviest calamities fall upon himself. Believers in Jesus glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them. They count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations; they think it not strange concerning any fiery trial which is to try them, as though some strange thing happened unto them, rejoicing inasmuch as they are partakers of Christ's sufferings. They know that when God dealeth with them thus; he dealeth with them as with sons, and not as with bastards. They reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in them; they know that their light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For they look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. They love God, and they know that God loves them; therefore are they

assured that all things work together for their good. What God does they may not know now; but they are sweetly comforted by the blessed assurance that they shall know hereafter. A present providence may be dark; but

*God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain.*

Believers, in this life, have trouble, it is true; but, then, they have rest *in* trouble here, and the unshaken faith that they will have rest *from* all trouble in the life which is to come. Hence, the happiest moments of the saints have been moments of suffering affliction. Daniel was happier in the den of lions than when he was honored as the chief president of the one hundred and twenty kingdoms of the Persian Empire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego never before were so nigh to God as they were in the flames of the fiery furnace, because a fourth was walking with them amid the flames whose form was like the Son of God. Paul and Silas never sung so blithely as on that night in the jail at Philippi, when their feet were fast in the stocks, and the blood was trickling down their bleeding, lacerated backs. Martyrs for Jesus have shouted the praises of God while consuming fires were roasting their flesh and licking up their life-blood. The pursuivant who summoned Latimer to his trial before the council at Westminster he greeted "as a welcome messenger," though he knew that "Smithfield already groaned for him." At the stake he saluted his martyr-companion with the cheering words: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as, I trust, shall never be put out." Embracing the flames, and stroking his face with his hands as if bathing it in them, his glorified spirit ascended on high as in a chariot of fire. Such suffering believers in Jesus, we repeat, bring

no charge of cruelty against the God they serve. Neither are they envious when they see the prosperity of the wicked. For they know that their Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after their skin worms destroy their bodies, yet in their flesh shall they see God; whom they shall see for themselves, and their eyes shall behold, and not another. They know whom they have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed unto him against that day. They know that if their earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want;" "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"—these are their songs in the house of their pilgrimage. Let earthquakes and tempests shake earth and sea, they will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. For there is to them "a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early."

But why multiply these precious things of the saints of God—the believers in Jesus? Instead of charging God with cruelty, they glory in tribulations. They see the end of the Lord therein; they know that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. They understand them all to be but trials of their faith; and that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, shall be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Richest compensations for all their sufferings here will he give

to them who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think. What does Baalism, what does atheism, what does infidelity offer in exchange for the exceeding great and precious promises of the personal God of the Old and New Testament Scriptures? No God, and no hope in the world, is all they promise here; a tomb, an eternal sleep, or annihilation at best, is all they hold out in the future. Wherefore, the God that answereth by fire is our God, and he shall be our guide even unto death. For "he doeth all things well." "He sent redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant forever; holy and reverend is his name." "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Clouds and darkness may be round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. "*Why then halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.*" Reader, choose this day whom you will serve! O that your choice, now and forever, may be the choice of Joshua: "*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" Amen.

## CHAPTER XX.

### PRAYER AND ANSWER.

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WE asked, Where was the king when the priests of Baal were arrested? Did he interpose no resistance to the execution of the prophet's sentence? The record is silent; at least it gives no direct answer. If he were disposed to interfere, and did try to protect the condemned priests of his god, his efforts, king as he was, were unavailing against the mighty impulse given to the people by the answer of fire, and the triumph of Elijah. Nothing could withstand the impetuous multitude that rushed to do the prophet's bidding. Ahab's will, if he purposed to protect the priests, was as powerless against the surging crowd as thistle-down before Eurus or Notus, when they sweep in violence over sea and land. But we think it more than likely that Ahab himself, for the time, was borne irresistibly along with the multitude. If he did not join in the popular acclaim, "THE LORD, *he is the God!*" he seems to have given his consent to the prophet's sentence, and to have been present and approving when Baal's priests were slain at the Kishon. For after the execution was over, Elijah said unto Ahab: "*Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.*" And it is added, "*So Ahab went up to eat and to drink.*"

"*Get thee up, eat and drink,*" was manifestly addressed to Ahab by the prophet at the Kishon, and just after he had slain the four hundred and fifty priests. It shows that the king had gone down from Carmel to the brook. "*Get thee up,*" was Elijah's command; "*So Ahab went up,*" means that

he obeyed, and returned from the Kishon to the mount. That Ahab was humiliated and self-abased, appears evident from the prophet's present care for his wants. "*Get thee up, eat and drink*" was expressive of his tenderness for the humbled king, and of his belief in and acceptance of his penitence. Elijah comforts the penitent monarch by the announcement of the approaching rain. God had called his prophet away from the house of the widow woman at Zarephath, saying: "*Go, shew thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.*" But we saw that Elijah did not make this announcement to Ahab when he met him after his interview with Obadiah. If the king had been humble and penitent, it would then have been made. That he was not, was evident from the accusation which he brought against the prophet, "*Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*" Wherefore, as before said, the Tishbite withheld from Ahab the purpose for which God sent him from Zarephath. Neither was the near return of rain made known to him upon Mount Carmel. For not yet was he prepared to receive it; not yet was Elijah ready to make it known. But now that Baal's priests have been slain; now that Ahab did not interfere to prevent it, but was present and assenting; and now that the proud king, humbled by the judgments of Jehovah, is penitent, Elijah tells him to go up to Carmel, for "*there is a sound of abundance of rain.*"

*"And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Go up, now, look toward the sea. And he went up and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."*

Elijah went to the top of Carmel to pray; and he went up there to pray for rain. But had not Elijah told Ahab that there was "a sound of abundance of rain?" and did he not say this before he left the brook? Why, then, did the prophet pray for it, if he had already heard its sound, and knew that it was coming? why did he speak as if it were already in sight, and its noise might be heard? The implicit faith of God's prophet supplies the ready answer. Faith-sees and hears before the thing desired and asked is revealed to the senses. Its language is the language of certainty unmixed with doubt or unbelief. Whatever is greatly desired, and by implicit child-like faith is sought in prayer, is so sure that it is regarded already in possession. This is that faith which our blessed Lord exhorted his apostles to have when they wondered that the fig-tree, which he had cursed, was so soon dried up and withered away. When Peter called it to remembrance, the Master answered and said: "*Have faith in God.*" It was such faith in the divine power, and in God's faithfulness to his promises, as God has in himself.

Our translators, staggering at the saying of our Lord—*Ἐχετε πίστιν θεοῦ*—translate, "*Have faith in God.*" They put into the margin, however, "*Have the faith of God;*" but they did not have faith enough to receive so large a saying, and put it into their English text. The translators of the New Version had still less faith; for they render, as in our Authorized Version, "*Have faith in God,*" omitting altogether the marginal reading of the latter, as if our Lord's saying were an adagial hyperbole that must be toned down to meet the weakness of their own faith. For there is no man, not blinded by unbelief, who does not see that our blessed Lord must have used the words in some special sense, and to denote some extraordinary gift. If he simply exhorted the apostles to "have faith in God," his saying is

of universal application. For it may be applied to things far less difficult than withering a green fig-tree by a word, removing mountains, or plucking up sycamore-trees by the roots. There was not one of the apostles who did not have faith in God; there was not one of them who did not, by faith, receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. This profession of faith in him was the rock upon which he built his Church. And yet their faith needed strengthening; what they lacked was the faith of God—such as God has in himself. Nor did our Lord simply mean that the faith which he told them to have should be the faith which comes from God, and of which he is the author. For this is true of all faith. There is no faith that is not of God. It was true of the faith which enabled the apostles to call Jesus the Christ; for no one can call Jesus the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. The weakest faith is as much of God as the strongest. Hence if the Master only meant that they should receive their faith from God, what did he tell the apostles more than they already knew? Manifestly, then, the faith of which he speaks is some extraordinary faith—a faith that no more doubts God than God doubts himself.

And such is child-like faith—the faith that knows nothing whatever of fear or doubt. Have such faith—and have it ye may—and then ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. If it be never so small; if it be but as a grain of mustard-seed, it can do not only what was done to the fig-tree, but it can remove mountains. For the faith that is as a grain of mustard-seed is not, as may be casually supposed, the least possible, but large and extraordinary faith. If such faith is the least possible, then he who cannot remove mountains has no faith at all. The apostles' faith was more than the least, or Christ would not have so honored it; but it was not all that it should be. For they still had questionings and doubts and fears. They had not



the faith of God. There were many things which they did not receive, and many things which they could not do, because of their faith's weakness. As a grain of mustard-seed that is good and pure, with a sound and healthy germ, is capable of reproducing itself, and of becoming a tree in whose branches the birds of heaven may lodge, so the faith, that is like it, can do what is equally great and wonderful. And as the mustard-seed is unmixed, and has nothing foreign to itself, so "the faith of God"—the faith which God has in himself, and which we may have in him—is pure, and without any mixture of fear or doubt whatever. Hence our Lord, in the same passage which treats of the withered fig-tree, says: "*Whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive, and ye shall have them.*" This is "the faith of God;" this is the faith like a grain of mustard-seed. It never questions. It never doubts. It takes God at his word. It believes him faithful that has promised. It knows there is nothing impossible with God. It leans upon his promise. And its repose is the repose of absolute rest. For it has in possession whatever it needs the very moment it is needed.

And it has the assurance of success, and justifies its prediction. Its marked characteristic is that it is generally preceded by the declaration that the thing to be done is already done. "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.*" Strength to the feet and ankle-bones of the impotent man Peter knew would accompany his command. Unless this were simultaneously given, how could he "rise up and walk?" And yet this was what the apostle told him to do. It was a thing which Peter would not have required, if he had not been perfectly assured that the needed strength would be instantly given. At Lydda, there was

“a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.” And unto him Peter said: “Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise, and make thy bed.” And the self-same moment he arose.

Now, Elijah did no more than this, when, before it came, he said there was “a sound of abundance of rain.” The whole thing is comprehended in, and made plain by, the saying and promise of our Lord: *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive, and ye shall have them.*” The answer to such faith is so sure that he who has it may say that the thing desired and asked is already received. And the effect of such faith is not, because the answer is assured, to restrain or withhold prayer, but to make it more earnest and importunate. It is doubt or unbelief that makes us neglect to pray; and it is doubt or unbelief, when we do pray, that causes us to faint and to give over before the answer is received. The faith which overcomes never wavers, knowing that the answer will be as and at the very time the thing asked is needed. It wrestles, if need be, from the going down of the sun until the morning breaks. Such faith was Jacob’s, and such was Elijah’s.

But it may also be asked, Did not Elijah say to Ahab that there should not be dew nor rain these years but according to his word? Why, then, did he pray, seeing that, by speaking the word only, he could bring them again? The answer is, Elijah could not speak the word which withheld them until, in answer to prayer, the Lord God of Israel authorized him to withhold them. Nor could he speak the word which should return them before the same Lord God, in answer to prayer, permitted him to speak it. In both instances the withholding and the restoring were according to Elijah’s word; but that it was so, was in direct answer to his prayer. St. James lets us into the whole se-

cret. In proof of the postulate that "*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much with God,*" he tells us that "*Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*" And thus we see that both the drought and the return of rain were due to "the effectual fervent prayer" of Elijah the prophet of God.

As the rain was in answer to prayer, it was well that the people should know it, and that the man of God should set them an example. It was well that they should see the connection between the prayers of Elijah and the drought which afflicted Samaria for three years and a half and the return of rain to revive the earth. It showed to them, as nothing else could, the sovereignty of the personal God of Israel over all the forces of nature, and their own absolute dependence upon him for all of nature's gifts. It reminded them that God could shut up and open the heavens at his will; that the sunshine and the dew, the early and the latter rain, and the fruitful seasons, are given or withheld at his word. And it recalled vividly to their remembrance the promises of covenant-keeping Jehovah to their fathers, and his gracious and marvelous answers to their prayers.

We have thus far, while tracing the history of the Tishbite, met with four memorable answers to his effectual fervent prayers—the drought, raising from the dead the young son of the widow woman of Zarephath, the fire which came down from heaven upon the sacrifice on Carmel, and the cloud which arose out of the Mediterranean and brought the rain to the parched fields and vineyards, and to the dried-up wadies and brooks of Samaria. It is not possible that Elijah's example was lost even upon the then semi-infidel and idolatrous children of Israel. It is more than

probable that many of the multitude on Carmel were persuaded by the successes of Elijah to return to their allegiance to the God of their fathers, and to revive his worship. And it is more than likely that many who had not bowed the knee to Baal, but had ceased to pray to Jehovah, afterward became men of prayer, strong in faith, and giving glory to God.

The Christian, every believer in Jesus, will be reminded by Elijah's example of our blessed Lord. Jesus of Nazareth—the God-man—was a man of prayer. At his baptism, while he was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice from heaven said: "*Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*" The night before he chose his twelve apostles he went into a mountain, and continued all night in prayer. After his most popular miracle—multiplying the loaves and fishes—which won him the praises of thousands, and drew after him an applauding multitude, he retired, and was alone praying. On the mountain apart, as he prayed, he was transfigured; the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. At the Supper, having warned Peter that Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat, he told him he had prayed for him that his faith fail not. In Gethsemane, when about to drink the bitter cup of the world's woes, in an agony of bloody sweat he prayed three times, and said: "*Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.*" Just before his arrest and death he prayed to the Father in behalf of his disciples, and of all who should afterward, through them, believe on him. And his almost latest breath was spent in prayer for the men who sentenced him to the cross and nailed him to it.

But we must return to Elijah. He went up to the top

of Carmel. Away from the multitude, on one of the highest points of the mount, he went, that he might be alone when he prayed and communed with God. Like Jesus after him, whose transfiguration he was to witness, he retired apart to pray. This reminds us not only of the custom of our blessed Lord, but of the advice he gave his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount: "*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*" Thus the prophet of God went to pray. The top of Carmel was his closet; the door was shut; and no one saw but the Father, which seeth in secret. His servant—who is mentioned for the first time—went up with him, but not to stay and be present when he prayed. He has a use for his servant, but he is not to be a looker-on or a hearer while his master wrestles in prayer with the Holy One of Israel. So our Lord took Peter and James and John to the garden; but they were not to witness his anguish or to hear his agonizing prayer. "*Sit ye here,*" said he to them, "*while I go and pray yonder.*" "*And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed.*" And thus Elijah was alone with God. He means work when he prays, and addresses himself to it with all the earnestness of his intense nature.

"*And he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees.*" He is bowed down in the humblest attitude, and with an earnestness that reminds us of the time when he stretched himself upon the body of the lifeless boy in the upper room at Zarephath. His head touches the ground; his face is between his knees. It is not enough

that he is alone amid the solitudes of Carmel's top. He shuts out of view the brassy heavens above, the blue sea in the west, Carmel's lovely environs, its grottoes, its rocks, its shrubbery, and its trees. His senses are closed to all sights and sounds of earth; the eye of faith sees only God; and his interior ear is opened to catch his slightest whisper.

But before he begins his earnest pleadings with Israel's God he says to his servant: "*Go up now, look toward the sea.*" On the side of the Mediterranean, and overlooking it with unobstructed view, the servant of the prophet looks out over its waters. He is there to watch the distant horizon, and to report to his master the first cloud appearing above it. Meanwhile the man of God, with his head still resting on the earth and his face between his knees, is pouring out his soul in wrestling, importunate prayer. The servant, who had gone up and looked, returns, saying: "*There is nothing.*" Not the smallest speck of cloud has he seen; the heavens are as hard and brassy as ever. But the prophet is not discouraged. For he said: "*Go again seven times.*" By this answer the Tishbite shows that he means to prevail; that his faith will take no denial. He evidently uses the number seven—a number denoting perfection among the Hebrews—to signify to his servant that he must keep going until signs of rain appear. And so the servant goes up again and again, and returns with the same answer: "*There is nothing.*" But "*it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand.*" It is enough! Elijah knows that his prayer is answered. That "little cloud" is bringing to Samaria the long looked-for rain.

O for the unwavering faith of Elijah the Tishbite! We ask, and because we do not receive we faint, and cease to pray. We ask and receive, and yet believe not. But the

“little cloud” was enough to satisfy Elijah. In honor of his faith it became a great cloud that covered the whole heavens, and was big with rain. Little blessings, when received with child-like faith, become great blessings. But when little blessings are received with doubt, or with wavering faith, even they grow smaller, and may disappear altogether. The faith of many is like the faith of the apostles and disciples in Jerusalem, who, after Peter was cast into prison, made unceasing prayer to God for his deliverance. In answer to their petitions, and while they were yet offering them, God sent his angel, who opened the prison-doors, struck off the two chains which bound the apostle, and conducted him safely to the iron gate leading to the city. Peter went straight to the house of Mary the mother of Mark, “*where many were gathered together, praying,*” and knocked at the door of the gate. When Rhoda, the little damsel, who, hearing Peter’s voice, opened not the gate for gladness, returned, and told them Peter stood before it, they believed her not, but thought it was his angel. And when they opened the gate and saw that it was he, they were astonished. And yet it was for Peter’s deliverance they were praying, and at that very hour. God of Elijah, increase our faith! O for faith like his! O for the faith of the heathen Syrophenician woman!—a faith that holds on, even when the answer is, “There is nothing!” a faith that will not let go even when the answer is, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs;” a faith that will reply, “Go again seven times;” or, “Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.”

When the servant of the prophet told him that he had seen a little cloud arising out of the sea like a man’s hand, the prophet said to him: “*Go up, say to Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.*”

And reason there was for haste! For "*the heaven was soon black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.*"

Dr. Adam Clarke, in his comments on this passage, after saying that the little cloud was "in the form of the hand bent, the concave side downward," adds: "I have witnessed a resemblance of this kind at sea, previously to a great storm. A little cloud the size of a man's hand, first appearing, and this increasing in size and density every moment, till at last it covered the whole heavens, and then burst forth with incredible fury." The same learned writer mentions a similar occurrence, which Mr. Bruce witnessed, during his travels in Abyssinia, that put him "always in mind of Elijah's foretelling rain on Mount Carmel." But perhaps the most striking illustration of the "little cloud" seen by Elijah's servant, is in Mr. Emerson's "Letters from the Ægean." We give it as Dr. Kitto gives it; we quote from the "Forty-sixth Week—Saturday," in "Solomon and the Kings" of his "Daily Bible Illustrations:"

"There is something remarkable to us in the sign by which the prophet knew that the rain was coming. A little cloud in the horizon would be to us of small significance; but it is not so in the East. The clearness of the sky renders the slightest appearance of the kind distinctly visible, and it is known to be the sign of an immediate storm with violent rain. Of several instances that occur to us, one of the most graphic is that given by Mr. Emerson, in his 'Letters from the Ægean.' He is at sea in a Greek vessel in the Levant. One morning, which had opened clear and beautiful, it was announced that a squall might be expected. No sign recognizable by European landsmen appeared, but on attention being properly directed, 'a little black cloud' was seen on the verge of the horizon toward the south which



was every instant spreading rapidly over the face of the sky, and drawing nearer to the vessel. Order was immediately given to strike sail, and to prepare the vessel for scudding before the hurricane. 'But scarcely an instant had elapsed ere the squall was upon us, and all grew black around; the wind came rushing and crisping over the water, and in a moment the ship was running almost gunwale down, while the rain was dashing in torrents on the decks. As quick as thought the foresail was torn from the yards, and as the gust rushed through the rigging the sheets and ropes were snapping and cackling with a fearful noise. The crew, however, accustomed to such sudden visitants, were not slow in reefing the necessary sails, trimming the rigging, and bringing back the vessel to her proper course; and in about a quarter of an hour, or even less, the hurricane had all passed away, the sun burst out again through the clouds that swept in its impetuous train; the wind sunk to its former gentleness, and all was once more at peace, with the exception of the agitated sea, that continued for the remainder of the day rough and billowy.'"

Elijah's prayers and their answers, the practical use St. James has made of them, the very great insistence upon prayer, and the exceeding great and precious promises given to it—both in the Old and New Testament—will be our excuse for devoting the remainder of the chapter to its further consideration. We have seen that our Lord was frequent in prayer. It is said, "*As he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.*" The disciples of Jesus noticed that it was the habit of their Master to retire alone to pray. It was natural, therefore, for them to attribute his holy life, and his many wonderful works, to his prayers to the Father. From this they thought that he knew the secret of successful prayer; that he knew how to

pray, and what petitions were the most pleasing and acceptable to God. Hence they desired to know this secret. And as their Lord knew it, they requested him to teach them how to pray, that their prayers might be answered as his were. In compliance with this request he gave them that exquisite form, which ever since has been to his Church a model for all prayer. In its comprehensive petitions is included every real want of the human soul. As there are times when we know not what is best, or what is according to the will of God, it is a blessed privilege to have recourse to a prayer indited by Him who is the life, the truth, and the way. In the Lord's Prayer, which is the Christian's "petition of right," there is not a petition which does not comprehend both what is best and what is according to the will of God, and that does not embrace, directly or indirectly, every thing needful and proper. There is not a request for ourselves, or others, that is not embraced in the petition, "*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*" For God, who knows our desires—no matter how special and secret they may be—knows whether they are according to his will. And if they are, and we ask in faith, his word is pledged to fulfill them. His promise is sure. It cannot fail.

These things being so, there is no wonder our Lord said, "*Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*" For prayer is the only channel through which God promises to convey the blessings of providence and grace. But does not God send the early and the latter rain upon the evil as well as upon the good, and cause his sun to shine upon the unjust as well as upon the just? That is true. For the eyes of all wait upon him; and he giveth them their meat in due season. He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. In him all live, and move, and have their being. Men have food and raiment, seed-time and harvest, who never ask God for them, or return him thanks when they are re-

ceived. But it is still true that prayer is the only channel of promise. "*Ask, and ye shall receive,*" is the only assurance that the commonest blessings of providence will be ours.

And is it not true that God so loved the world that he gave to all his only-begotten Son? and did not Jesus by the grace of God taste death for every man? did he not die for the ungodly, for sinners, and for his enemies? That is all true. Jesus is God's unspeakable gift to the whole human race. God is no respecter of persons; and all men, through grace, have an equal right to his provisions of recovering mercy. But while this is so, the saving benefits of Christ's atonement—pardon, holiness, and heaven—can never be appropriated unless we ask for them in God's appointed way. Here, too, "*Ask, and ye shall receive,*" is the only pledge of God's blessings of grace.

As he is faithful that has promised, every thing needful in providence or grace is vouchsafed to believing prayer. No prayer of faith, since the first promise made to man that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, has ever been lost, or can, by any possibility, be lost. The answer is sure. For all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in him amen. The answer will come at some time or other. It may not come when we expect it; it may not come in the way we desire it: yea, the specific thing asked may be withheld, but the answer is none the less certain. For withholding it may be the best and directest answer. God, who sees the end from the beginning, knows what is best. But even when he withholds, he gives more abundant compensation; he gives what is best, and what is most needed. Hence, "*Men ought always to pray, and not to faint,*" even though the answer be not immediately received, or come at a time and in a way we looked not for it.

There are three things necessary to successful prayer. If they are observed, there will be no doubt that it will be

heard and answered. We must be earnest, we must be importunate. The power of importunity is beautifully illustrated by our Lord in the parable of the widow before the unjust judge. By her importunity she succeeded, and was avenged of her adversary. Her earnestness was the whole secret of success. And if importunity had such influence before a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man, "how much more shall God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" "I tell you," said our Lord, "that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

But it is not enough that we be importunate. Something more is needed. And what that is our Lord illustrated by another parable. The Pharisee who thanked God that he was not as other men are was as much in earnest as the importunate widow. There was no more earnest sect than the Pharisees. They were so earnest in the observance of the law that they tithed mint and anise and cummin. One may be as earnest in parading his gifts as in making known his wants. The proud and self-righteous may importunately besiege Heaven's throne, demanding a recognition of his merits and an exchange of favors. Earnestness without humility may not only be absolutely worthless, but insufferably offensive. The despised publican, on whom the proud and earnest Pharisee looked down with the utmost contempt, felt himself so unworthy that he stood afar off, and would not lift up so much as eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This man went down to his house justified rather than the other. And why? Because he was humble as well as importunate. His sacrifice was the sacrifice of a broken heart and of a penitent and contrite spirit. And he was accepted: "For every one that exalteth himself

shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Come, then, to God in prayer with the importunity of the widow, but be sure that you come with the humility of the publican.

But one may be both importunate and humble and yet need something as important—yea, more important—than importunity and humility. That something our Lord illustrated by an incident which occurred as he ended the parables. It happened just then that "they brought unto him also infants, that he should touch them; but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." Who does not see that one may have the importunity of the widow and the humility of the publican and yet want the simplicity, the guilelessness, and implicit faith of a little child? Come, then, to God in prayer with the first and with the second requisite, but see to it that you are not wanting in the third. For the cry of the importunate and the humble may be the wail of despair. One may cry importunately, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and feel it with keenest anguish. The sorrows of death may compass him; the pains of hell may get hold upon him. But he will find only trouble and sorrow—though out of the depths he cry unto the Lord—unless he believes that gracious is the Lord and righteous; yea, our God is merciful, and he preserveth the simple; unless with the simplicity, the guilelessness, and the trust of a little child he receives the kingdom of God. What more simple, guileless, confiding than an infant resting upon the breast of a fond and devoted mother? And yet that mother may become weary of the cry of her sucking child. But our heavenly Father

is never wearied by the cries of his earnest, humble, simple, confiding children. With what sweet and blessed assurance we may come to him when we come to him thus! For he is more willing to hear us and to grant our requests than earthly parents are to give good gifts unto their children. Reader, the application of the saying, "*Men ought always to pray, and not to faint,*" is as wide and varied as are the real wants of the human soul. Pray always; pray without ceasing. "*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*" Pray, and never faint; in due time you shall reap, if you faint not. Something more, which we have to say, must be reserved to the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

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**O**BJECTIONS to prayer have their foundation in unbelief. Faith never questions God's word, believing that he will not only supply every real want of the saints, but give strength to do his commands, even the most difficult and seemingly impossible, as when he ordered Joshua, by walking around it, to take a strong city fortified by nature and art. How could a walled city, defended by brave and warlike men, be taken by the means which the leader of the Israelitish host was required to employ? Without scaling-ladders, or battering-rams, or catapults, or engines of war of any kind, and without assault, the Hebrew commander was ordered to wrest Jericho from its powerful king and his mighty men of valor. And yet "*by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.*" Faith, when it is in want, looks to God for its supply, and takes no thought for the morrow. And when God commands it obeys, confident that he will furnish the means, point out the way, and give all needed grace.

Two arguments we purpose to notice upon which certain cavilers confidently rely to sustain their objections to prayer. It is contended, *first*, that often prayer has required, and does now require, the impossible—namely, changes in the ordinary course of nature; and, *second*, that he who, according to the Christian religion itself, is unchangeable, must himself change before he can answer prayer. These objections against the Christian idea of prayer and answer are

the objections of unbelief. For they are not so much aimed against the prayers of believers as against the supreme personal God to whom believers pray. They lie against a divine revelation which claims to have been confirmed by miracles that were unmistakably interferences with the ordinary course of nature. For if it be granted that there is a supreme personal God, that he is the Almighty Creator of the universe, upholding all things by the word of his power, and prescribing the laws by which all material things in earth and sky are governed, there is no one who would say that it is impossible for him to suspend or alter his own laws. Admit his creative, directive, and omnific power, and who will say that if he suspend a single law he must effectually and destructively interfere with the order and harmony of the universe? If certain laws hold a revolving planet in its orbit, cannot the Almighty Creator, who gives to those laws all their force, temporarily suspend them, and, in some other way equally effective, preserve that planet's orbit, and yet not interfere with the operations of the other parts of almost limitless systems? Has he not power, if it so please him, not only to suspend the laws, but the planet itself, and yet not interrupt the movements of any other? If there be no supreme Almighty Creator, neither the one nor the other can be done; but if there be, it is as easy for him to do either as to have created the planet, given it motion, and started it upon its orbit. If by the mere word of his power he can speak a world into being, and give it laws, is it ever afterward beyond his power to direct its movements or make in them the slightest alterations? Has the God of nature no power over nature to control its operations? Is the creature, as soon as it is created, independent of its Creator? Then has he made something as great as or greater than himself; then is the matter which he has made as unchangeable and as eternal



as himself. Is the thing formed as great as or greater than he who formed it? Is gross matter equal to the ethereal Spirit, or intelligent Mind, that created it? Is a watch of curious mechanism that tells the hours equal to the sentient being whose genius cunningly contrived it, nicely adjusted its parts, and then set it going? If the contriver is greater than the watch, then is the Almighty Creator of the universe infinitely greater than the universe. For the maker of the watch uses substances already in being; he has created not the minutest particle that enters into it. But the God of the Bible said, "Light be, and light was." By his omnific word "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." And has not he who has power to create power to destroy? In his great laboratory of nature can he not proceed either by synthesis or by analysis at his own will? And if he has power to destroy, has he not power to change, to modify, or to suspend? And if so, has he not power to so modify the course of nature that some one of its so-called laws may be for a time suspended, and yet the general order receive no detriment? We say so-called laws; for what are they, after all, but the intelligent will of the Almighty One, everywhere present, upholding and directing all things? What are the laws of the land in which we live but the will of its supreme law-making power? Are its laws so arbitrary and fixed that they cannot be annulled or modified or suspended? Has not even *habeas corpus* been suspended? and has not its suspension sometimes been the only means of preserving the very liberties which, for a time, it restrained? And what are the laws, both physical and moral—for God is supreme and absolute in both domains—which he has made for the government of the universe, but his own sovereign and potential will?

All matter has just the properties and characteristics

which God gives it. He has given to every seed and to all matter a body or a form as it hath pleased him. Hence the difference in the flesh of animals; hence the difference between bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial; hence the endless variety in material things. Has he given to every body its own properties according to his sovereign pleasure, and can he not modify the properties of a single one without interfering with any other of the same kind? Can he not do this without reducing all things to their original chaos? If for a great purpose he caused a single ax to swim upon water, what change did it make in the properties of any other ax, or what disturbance did it cause in any other body of water? If he gave to a single handful of salt power to purify the waters of Jericho, and to make an unfruitful soil productive, did it affect any other salt, or make any other bitter waters sweet? There is not a miracle of the Old or New Testament Scriptures that caused any thing but a temporary change in the particular thing or things affected by it. All things else continued as God had fixed them; there was not the slightest disturbance in the general order and harmony of the universe.

But now not even must these or like modifications necessarily take place when God answers prayer. In the Scriptures God sometimes, in answer to prayer, did work miracles. This was done to serve some great purpose. It was done in attestation of some important, newly revealed truth, to confirm the appointment of some heaven-sent messenger, or to show to the doubting the absolute and omnipotent power of the personal God of the Bible. It was done to confound Baalism. It was to show that the Lord God of Israel is the only living and true God. How could he do this unless he revealed his power over the course of nature? If, therefore, he suspended a law, it was to demonstrate that his sovereign will is the source of all law. And in no other

way could this be done. Take away from the Almighty Creator the right and the power to interfere with the ordinary course of nature, and you take away the only means by which he can prove his almightiness. If he interfere, it is to prove that the very fixedness of nature's laws is dependent upon his own will. And hence, by the very suspension, he proves that if he were to withdraw himself from nature, universal chaos would be the result. By his interference—by his control over nature's laws demonstrated by their suspension—we now know that no power outside of himself can interrupt its course. We now have the surest pledge of the stability of its laws. That God rules is the strongest evidence that all things will continue as they are. That he binds the sweet influences of the Pleiades, that he looses the bands of Orion, that he guides Arcturus with his sons, that he has said to the proud sea, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther," and that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, give to the believer the surest guarantee that the order and harmony of the universe shall be preserved till the Lord God himself, by his mighty angel, swear that time shall be no more.

That miracles were wrought in answer to prayer no one will question who believes the Bible to be a revelation from God. That they are now wrought for the same or for any other object may or may not be true. It may be, as the revelation of God to man is closed, that they have served their purpose, and are no longer needed. They may have passed away forever; they may no more be sent in answer to prayer or otherwise. For there may be not a want of a saint of God that may not now be supplied without miracle. God may so order all things that all things work together for good to them that love him, and yet not a single one of nature's laws be changed. And hence the objection that prayer may involve a change in the ordinary course

of nature does not hold, no matter from what stand-point the objection comes.

As applied to times preceding the close of revelation, the objection does not hold; for if we credit revelation, changes in the ordinary course of nature, in answer to prayer, were often made. To deny this is to deny revelation itself. The connection between it and miracle is inseparable. To deny revelation is to deny miracle; to deny the latter is to deny the former; to deny both is to deny the existence of a supreme personal God. The three stand or fall together. Do away with the Bible, and you do away with miracle; do away with miracle, and you do away with the Bible; do away with the Bible, and you blot a supreme personal God out of the universe.

And this objection to prayer holds not now; for no man can show that, since revelation was closed, a single true answer to prayer has been received involving a suspension of the ordinary course of nature. But if he could show it, if he could make out a clear case that to answer a certain prayer—which was truly answered—some law of nature must have been suspended, and therefore, in the objector's judgment, could not have been answered, still the objection is not a good one. For if the suspensions recorded in the Bible were true suspensions, then it is no more impossible for God, if he see fit, to suspend nature's laws now than in Old and New Testament times.

It is contended, *second*, that as God, according to the Christian belief, is unchangeable, he cannot be affected by prayer; for then must he change, which would be a contradiction in terms. What is unchangeable, it is said, cannot change. Cavilers flippantly use this as if it were an argument irresistibly conclusive. But it is no argument at all; it is unworthy of the name. It is indeed a truism, if the terms are used in all regards as direct opposites. But

they may be opposite only in certain regards, while in certain others they may both be predicated of the same person. One, for instance, is said to be unchangeable who is always true to principle; and yet to be true to principle may involve a change of convictions. A man who is always true to his convictions will be sure to change the moment he finds he is in the wrong. He is not so unchangeable that he cannot change. In no way can he who is true to principle, and has the courage of his convictions, show his unchangeableness so well as in the fact that he has the wisdom and the courage to change when he ought. And in nothing is God so consistent with his attribute of immutability as in the fact that he is changed by prayer. The wisest and most courageous, who is truest to principle, may, through human imperfection, know not when to change. But God, who knoweth all things, can never be in doubt. He is both changed by prayer and knows when to change. If he is not then changed, he is not immutable. And this is not a contradiction; it is not even a paradox. To preserve his attribute of immutability, God must be consistent with all his other inalienable attributes, and especially with *truth*, with faithfulness to his promises. If he keep not his promises, he is not immutable.

He has promised to reward the faithful and to punish the unfaithful. He has promised pardon to the penitent and wrath to the impenitent. He has promised to give grace to the humble and to resist the proud. He has promised to lift upon the contrite the light of his reconciled countenance; and he has promised to keep his anger against the incorrigible. To be consistent with himself, he must be true to his promises; to be true to his promises, he must hear and answer prayer; to hear and answer prayer, he must change, and thereby prove his unchangeableness. And hence this very objection urged against prayer is the strongest argument in its favor.

For if God is not changed by prayer, if by it his anger does not give place to reconciliation, then is he indeed fickle and changeable; then is he even untrue to his word. But, blessed be God! he is true and faithful. He may be angry now; but if we repent and ask forgiveness, he will abundantly forgive. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And the Lord is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness; and his gifts and calling are without repentance. God has said it—and he will surely be true to his word—that, in answer to the prayer of the contrite, he will turn his wrath into peace, and the love of pity—which he always keeps—into the love of complacency. And he does not repent of the promise. For he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. But this he could not be if he cannot be changed by prayer.

A fond and wise parent is the same, both when he looks with pity upon an erring, rebellious, and obstinate boy, and with complacency when he returns, confesses his sins, and, with penitential tears, pleads for forgiveness. But in one sense he is changed. He is the same fond and wise father; but, affected by the conduct of the boy, he is displeased when he sins, and pleased when he repents. Thus it is with God toward the returning, repenting prodigal. The prayer of the humble and contrite does not so change him as to make him a different God. But it does change his feelings toward and his dealings with him. For surely reconciliation is a different thing from wrath; the love of complacency from the love of pity. And this is indeed a great and radical change; it is a change in God toward the penitent petitioner who asks his forgiveness—a change which never would have taken place if the prodigal had not con-

fessed his sins and asked for pardon. God remains the same unchanged God, forgiving the penitent and condemning the impenitent. Not a divine attribute, either when he forgives or when he condemns, undergoes the slightest modification. All the attributes are kept in perfect harmony. And never are they more in harmony than when, in answer to the prayer of the humble and penitent, he changes from condemnation to reconciliation, blotting out the sentence of death against him, writing pardon upon his heart, taking him to his loving embrace, and turning an alien and rebel into a son and heir. If God gives when we ask, and withholds when we do not ask, then is he changed by prayer. And it is a change which attests the unchangeableness of his attributes.

If, then, God gives when we ask, and withholds when we do not ask, is he not changed by prayer? And is it not a change which proves unchanging faithfulness to his word? The truth of God has said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" and justice demands the execution of the sentence. But the love of pity provided such a full and complete satisfaction to their demands that mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. And now as God can be true to truth and justice, and yet pardon the humble and penitent sinner, he promises, if, by faith, he accepts the sacrifice of his only-begotten Son, to grant him pardon for his sins, cleansing for his guilt, and to turn pity into complacency. For this pardon and cleansing and complacency both God's truth and justice, equally with mercy and love, are now pledged. And is it not a mighty change that the faithfulness of God and the justice of God have become their guarantees? But these guarantees—such is God's plan of salvation—are guarantees only to those who plead for mercy, and offer the prayer of penitence and faith. To the impenitent and unbelieving God is always unrecon-

ciled; to the penitent and believing he becomes reconciled. And this change from the one to the other is effected by prayer — and by prayer alone — not as the instrumental cause, or any cause whatever, but because God has made the prayer of faith the only channel through which he promises to convey to the sinner the blessings of sins pardoned, the joy of salvation, and a place in an offended Father's complacent love.

The objection that prayer proposes a change in the unchangeable has been answered. In a word, he is unchangeable when he is changed by prayer; if he is not changed by it, then is he untrue, and, therefore, changeable.

Before we dismiss the objections to prayer, which we have been considering, we must return a moment to the first objection—namely, it may involve changes in the ordinary course of nature.

We said that God may now perform no miracle in answer to prayer. This may be so, and yet there is nothing in the New Testament which precludes it. If it is not now done, it is because it is unnecessary. But if it were, he could and would as easily do it at this day as ever before. Were it essential to fulfill a promise, it would surely be done. For nothing can possibly stand in the way of a single promise to his saints. No physical law would be allowed for a single moment to stand in the way of its fulfillment. Indeed, to alter a physical law is with God absolutely nothing, compared with altering a single moral law. The one may be altered, and God be still unchangeable; but if the other, then God's attribute of immutability would be seriously affected. A change in a physical law may involve no change in character or attribute, while every change in a moral law affects both. Hence it is literally easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle—for he who can subdue all things to himself may so modify the properties and rela-



tions of these material objects as to make it possible—than for a rich man, one who fixes his affections supremely on riches, to enter into the kingdom of heaven. For God must be untrue to his word, and do violence to his attribute of holiness, if he take to heaven an unclean idolater; and such is he who loves riches more than God. For God hath sworn that no idolater shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; that nothing out of harmony with it, and with himself, shall enter there. And God must deny himself, if he let any thing hinder the fulfillment of a single promise to the least of his saints. Heaven and earth must sooner pass away than a single promise of God fail.

But while, perhaps, it may never again, as in Old and New Testament times, be necessary for God to change the course of nature to fulfill a single promise to the prayer of faith, it is no less true that he now gives answer to prayer almost, if not quite, as marvelous as if miracles were wrought in answer to it. Thousands on thousands of God's saints can testify to this truth. The world is full of examples. There is not a true saint of God who does not know that God is a hearer and answerer of prayer. For the very fact that he is a saint, and that he has the knowledge of it, is to him proof positive that prayer is heard and answered. The assurance of sins forgiven, peace with God through Christ, the witness of the Spirit, the joy of salvation, rest in trouble, the patience of hope, victory over sin, grace to resist temptation, strength and courage to do, to suffer, and to rejoice in tribulation, have satisfied millions that God's ear is open to the cry of faith. And though no miracle be wrought, the Christian none the less believes that God is his Shepherd; that every good and perfect gift cometh from the Father of mercies; that God chooses his changes, orders his steps, and supplies his wants. To many special interpositions of providence he can confidently appeal. No miracle may be per-

formed to supply the needs of God's dear children, yet thousands can testify that God supplied them as surely as he fed Elijah by the brook Cherith, at Zarephath, and under the juniper-tree. Many a widow is just as sure that God furnished her with food as though the meal had been miraculously multiplied in the barrel and the oil in the cruse. Many a saint of God in want has been as truly supplied as Elijah by ravens at the brook Cherith.

But it may be asked, Do not the wicked sometimes have like marvelous deliverances? Grant that they have. The unbeliever has not prayed for them; the believer has. The unbeliever does not recognize God as the deliverer, and give him thanks; the believer knows that it is the Lord's doings, they are marvelous in his eyes, and for them he presents the sacrifice of a grateful and thankful heart. Besides, let it be remembered that God, if he interfere without prayer in behalf of the ungodly, does it that his goodness and mercy may lead to repentance, and to faith in Christ. And, after all, the interposition may not have been without prayer, but in direct answer to the prayer of a pious mother or wife, or friend, or pastor, or the Church of God.

Krummacher gives us a beautiful incident, which came under his own observation, and under the observation of his parishioners, in the valley of Barmen. Remarking that there is no end to God's wonders, even at this day, he adds: "Who was it but the God of Elijah who, only a short time ago, in our neighborhood, so kindly delivered a poor man out of distress—not indeed by a raven, but by a poor singing-bird? You are acquainted with the circumstances. The man was sitting, early in the morning, at his house-door; his eyes were red with weeping, and his heart cried to Heaven—for he was expecting an officer to come and distrain him for a small debt. And whilst sitting thus with his heavy heart, a little bird flew through the street, fluttering up and

down, as if in distress, until at length, quick as an arrow, it flew over the good man's head into his cottage, and perched itself on an empty cupboard. The good man, who little imagined who had sent him the bird, closed the door, caught the bird, and placed it in a cage, where it immediately began to sing very sweetly, and it seemed to the man as if it were the tune of a favorite hymn, 'Fear not thou when darkness reigns;' and as he listened to it he found it soothe and comfort his mind. Suddenly some one knocked at his door. 'Ah, it is the officer!' thought the man, and was sore afraid. But no, it was the servant of a respectable lady, who said that the neighbors had seen a bird fly into his house, and she wished to know if he had caught it. 'O yes,' answered the man, 'and here it is;' and the bird was carried away. A few minutes after the servant came again. 'You have done my mistress a great service,' said he; 'she sets a high value upon the bird which had escaped from her. She is much obliged to you, and requests you to accept this trifle with her thanks.' The poor man received it thankfully, and it proved to be neither more nor less than the sum he owed. And when the officer came, he said: 'Here is the amount of the debt; now leave me in peace, for God has sent it me.'"

John L. Jerry was a traveling preacher in the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at a time when that Conference embraced the States of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. He was a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and much devoted to the itinerant ministry. At one time he was sent to a large and new circuit in Florida. In this frontier country there were then but very few settlers, and they were poor, unable to support him if they were willing, and unwilling if they were able. One day he was riding on horseback by a lonely path that led through the woods. Seeing nothing but starvation before him if he remained on his work, he stopped

his horse, and began to reflect on the cheerless prospect before him. While debating the question whether he should proceed to his appointment or give up his charge and return home, it was suggested to him to dismount, and retire to a thicket of small water-oaks in a hammock a few paces from the road. Obeying the impulse, he dismounted, went to the thicket, and threw himself upon his knees. He went there to pray. But why not pray at the place where he got down from his horse? There was not a house, and perhaps not a human being, within ten or twenty miles. But no—he could not pray there; the thicket of oaks was the appointed place. Alone in that closet, and with its door shut, he communed with God, and talked with him as one talks face to face with his friend. He told all his complaint, and asked what he must do—whether he should return home or whether he should remain; and if he remained, whether God would promise to provide for him. The answer came. The God whose servant he was, and who had called him into the itinerant ministry, assured him—so he was persuaded—that he would be with him, and never forsake him. The itinerant preacher was made unspeakably happy; he had the witness of God's approval, and the pledge of his providential care. There was not a doubt on his mind that God had spoken to him, and promised that his presence should go with him. In the act of rising from his knees he opened his eyes, which had been closed while he communed with God, and, lo, there on the ground was something which arrested his attention. He picked it up. It was an old Spanish doubloon, worth about twenty dollars in United States currency. It bore a date which showed that, in all probability, it was dropped there nearly three hundred years before by some Spaniard when De Soto and his party traversed the wilds of Florida, and by that very route, in the early days of the discovery

of America. There, we believe, God watched over it; and there it remained until he was ready to use it for the supply of his servant's need. At all events, John L. Jerry so believed and so received it. He went on his way rejoicing, resolved to continue at his post.

The writer has given the above as it was confirmed to him by the late Rev. Samuel Anthony of precious memory, who knew John L. Jerry well, and heard it from his lips. The following we tell just as we heard it more than once—in the pulpit and out of the pulpit—from the mouth of the Rev. James O. Andrew, D.D., LL.D., who was, at the time of his death, senior Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and who vouched for its truth.

In one of our Southern Conferences was a preacher, who had a daughter in young womanhood who was sick unto death, and was expected every moment to breathe her last. She had, for some time before, been seeking the witness of God's Spirit to assure her of the Divine acceptance. The old father had been praying with and for her, beseeching God to give to his beloved child the blessing she was seeking. Leaving her bedside when she was manifestly dying, and without the witness, he went to his closet to wrestle with God in prayer, that, before taking his child out of the world, he would give to her the needed evidence of acceptance. The old man arose from his knees, and sat down in his chamber in calm and certain assurance that God had graciously heard and answered his prayer. When one from the dying girl came into the room where he was and told him that she was almost gone, he asked, "Has she obtained the witness?" "No," was the answer. "Nancy will not die yet," was the confident reply of the man of God. This was repeated several times, like questions and answers being asked and given, with the single difference that the maiden was rapidly drawing nearer and nearer to the

final moment. At last to the question, "How is Nancy?" it was answered, "She is dead." "Did she obtain the witness?" "No." The instant reply of faith was: "Then Nancy is not dead!" And so saying the gray-haired old father arose and went to the bedside of his child. There lay, to all appearances, her lifeless corpse, cold in death. Kind friends were proceeding to prepare her for the burial, when the old preacher interposed, and put them aside, saying: "Let her alone; she is not dead." The sorrowing and sympathizing friends who were present did not laugh him to scorn as certain Jews derided the Master when, at the bedside of Jairus's daughter, he said: "Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth." But they were tenderly solicitous, fearing lest the death of his beloved child had unsettled the old father's mind. Nothing could move him from his purpose that they should not touch her. For hours the watchers silently waited, far more concerned about the old preacher's aberration of mind than about the death of his daughter. As he sat and waited, perfectly calm, and with unwavering faith that God had given him a promise, and would be true to his word, his beloved Nancy, not unexpectedly to himself, but unexpectedly to all others present, suddenly opened her eyes. The tongue of the maiden was unloosed; praises to God from her lips filled the chamber, and astonished all except the man of strong faith. Nancy had received the witness of the Spirit, and was rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. "Now," said the old father, made equally happy by the joy of his darling, and the knowledge that God was true to his promise, "Nancy will die." And in a little while the maiden, who had fallen into a state of suspended animation having all the appearance of death, did die; and while her mouth was yet filled with laughter and her tongue with singing, she went from the chamber of death to join the white-robed choir

who sing the song of Moses and the Lamb around the throne of God in heaven.

Reader, have you ever seen a cyclone? If not, have you followed in its track, just after it carried ruin and death in its train? If you have neither seen one nor the track of one, you have doubtless read of its ravages in many parts of the Southern and Western States of the American Union as it swept in destructive fury and power over the regions which it visited. Give loose reins to your imagination; conceive of the greatest destruction possible; double what you have conceived, and you are below the reality. The writer has been uncomfortably near to one more than once. Often has he seen, after the event, the desolations they have made. Giant oaks and tall and immense pines were uprooted and handled as easily as one handles jack-straws, and scatters them when thrown from the hand.

One day in South-eastern Georgia a Methodist preacher, seated in a buggy, was driving a young and fractious horse. His road, which was in an unfrequented part of the country, was three narrow paths, such as may be seen in that region—one for the horse and two for the wheels, the space between being overgrown with low shrubbery and wire-grass. On one side of the road was a virgin forest of tall and huge pines, many at least nine feet in circumference and nearly one hundred feet in height; on the other side, next to the road and parallel to it, was a rail-fence, inclosing one side of a large field that had been originally such as was the native forest. This field was full of dead pines ready to fall and abounding in rotten limbs. The road ran by the side of the fence for nearly a mile, and was so close to it as barely to leave room for a vehicle to pass. When the preacher had gone some distance along this road, suddenly there was heard an ominous roaring, betokening

the near approach of the cyclone. Seeing that he was in its track, that it was about to burst in upon him without a way of escape, the man of God stopped his horse; and, still seated in his buggy, but with heart uplifted to God in prayer, awaited its coming. In a moment the unchained fury, careering in its madness, came rushing on, breaking limbs and uprooting trees. Not a tree in its course, living or dead, on either side of the road, was left standing. On and on it went, howling, roaring, crashing, sweeping all things before it, and tossing and whirling them about as easily as an ordinary gale tosses and whirls about feathers shaken out of a bag. While the fierce cyclone was passing by and over him, the preacher's young and fractious horse stood as gentle as if eating in his stall, and the man of God was as calm and peaceful as if sitting, on a quiet day, at his own hearth-stone with wife and children around him. Not a hair of his head was hurt; not the smallest limb or twig struck either him or his horse. On the side next to the field every rail of the fence—even to the bottom or worm rail, as it is called—was swept away except the two panels that lay along-side of his horse and buggy; and from them not a single rail had been taken. In front, in the rear, to the right, and to the left, and almost touching his horse and buggy, uprooted trees and broken trunks and limbs were piled up, forming a wall around him. He was shut in, but saved and unharmed.

That preacher is still living. More than twenty years ago the writer, who was then presiding elder on the Athens District, in what was then the Georgia Annual Conference, heard him tell it, in a sermon on special providence, at Wheat's Camp-ground, in Lincoln county. Never will the writer forget the impression the preacher's narrative made upon himself and upon the great congregation. He told it with artless simplicity—for Hezekiah Bussey is as guileless



as a child—with the big tears coursing down his honest and sun-burned face, with a heart full of love to God and man, with the strongest faith in a special providence, and with deepest gratitude to him who hears and answers prayer.

But God cannot hear and answer prayer, forsooth, because it interferes with the ordinary course of nature, and changes the unchangeable! Was not withholding the rain and dew for three years and six months, and their return in answer to Elijah's prayers, interferences with the ordinary course of nature? Was there no such interference when fire came down from God out of heaven upon his sacrifice on Carmel? none when, with one stroke of his mantle, he divided the waters of the Jordan? none when he raised to life again the dead son of the widow woman at Zarephath? and none when he ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire? And was not God changed by prayer when Abraham pleaded for the wicked cities of the plain? and when Moses turned God from his purpose to blot out Israel, and make him the head of a new and mightier nation? and when repenting Nineveh caused him to relent and turn away from his fierce anger? and when Hezekiah prolonged his forfeited life by fifteen years? But why multiply examples so abundant both in the Old and the New Testament Scriptures? The believer knows, whatever may be the objections of unbelievers, that his prayers are heard and answered when he prays with the importunity of the widow before the unjust judge, the humility of the publican, and the guilelessness, the simplicity, and the unquestioning faith of a little child, provided always that what he asks is within the promises, is best, and according to the will of God. And he knows the difference—no matter what it is called; call it change of relations or anything else—between an offended God and a reconciled

Father, between his condemnation and the witness of his Spirit, and between conviction and the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him.

We have seen that Elijah was a man mighty in prayer. This he could not have been unless he had been also mighty in faith. And such he was. It was his unwavering faith that gave such efficacy to his prayers. - No man indeed has ever especially prevailed with God in prayer who has not been especially distinguished for faith; for faith is the only thing which God honors, and it is always honored in proportion to its strength. To it the most important of the divine revelations were disclosed; and by it were the greatest discoveries in the material and spiritual world revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. And as it was by it—even before Elijah's day—"the elders obtained a good report," we purpose to devote the next chapter to its early and great discoveries.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### FAITH'S DISCOVERIES.

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**F**AITH in God through Christ has ever been the great and only want of the human soul. It was so from the beginning. For the only difference between an Old and a New Testament saint is the one believed in Messiah to come, and the other in Messiah come. It is humanity's *great* want; for it is the foundation of all true religion, and the basis of all acceptable worship. Without it, "*it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" And it is its *only* want; for it supplies all wants. The believer is Christ's; and if Christ's, then a son and heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. All things are his; all things are for his sake; and all things work together for his good. What else is needed? The Lord is his shepherd; he shall not want.

It is remarkable that in all the Scriptures the only definition of faith is in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." For this is a comprehensive definition of faith, and not, as some say, a mere encomium. And it is *saving* faith—faith in God through Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. So it has always been, is now, and ever shall be till faith is lost in sight. For never has salvation been in any other way. The apostle ascribes and applies it only to those who already inherit the promises, and to those who are now running the gospel race, compassed about by the former as "a cloud of witnesses." To live and

die in this faith is the only entrance to the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

It is "the substance"—the *ὑπόστασις*, from *ὑπό* and *ἵστημι*—of "things hoped for." The word occurs only five times in the New Testament. Three times—2 Cor. ix. 4, xi. 17, and Heb. iii. 14—it is rendered *confidence*; once—Heb. i. 3—*person*; and here—Heb. xi. 1—*substance*. It is literally that which is put under for a support or foundation, as under a building. And as the foundation imparts strength, solidity, stability, it gives confidence, being, substance, reality. Applied to "things hoped for," faith in God through Christ is that upon which they rest; it is their foundation, their substance—that which gives to them being, existence, permanence.

And it is "the evidence"—*ἔλεγχος*—"of things unseen." It is evidence, but it is evidence producing conviction, a firm persuasion. Its effect is like the demonstration of a problem in Euclid. The divine *elenchos* is unquestioned by the believer, because to him it has all the force of a demonstration. And as applied to "things unseen," he is persuaded of them, he embraces them, he has the conviction that they exist, are real and sure. And so complete is this conviction that he lives with reference to them, and acts upon them, as if they were cognizable by the senses; as if they could be seen with the eyes and touched with the hands.

This faith in God embraces him as he has successively revealed himself to man—as *Elohim*, or the almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe; as Jehovah, or the *Elohim* revealed—the Manifest God—the only self-existent, personal, and Holy One—a Spirit, and the Father of spirits—the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God, the loving Father, the gracious Redeemer, the faithful Guide, the tender Shepherd, who feeds, leads, watches over, and defends his

flock; as *Jehovah-Elohim*, the one ever-living and true God, uniting in himself all that is revealed of *Elohim* and *Jehovah*; as the God-man, *Elohim* and *Jehovah* manifest in the flesh, the Angel of the Covenant, the Shiloh, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, Emmanuel, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the great and merciful High-priest, and the Judge of quick and dead; as God the Holy Spirit, who convinces, convicts, converts, comforts, enlightens, teaches, bears witness to the believer's acceptance with God, helps, directs, purifies, sanctifies, fits for heaven, and puts into its possession; and as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three persons, and but one only living and true God. For as all this was known to the inspired apostle who gave the definition we are considering, the whole was embraced in the faith of a believer in his day. But how much was revealed to the Old Testament worthies we do not know; but we do know that enough was revealed of Messiah-God to make their worship acceptable, and give saving efficacy to their faith. For all faith in the revealed God of the Scriptures, however gradual and progressive the revelation—at what stage soever of it, and by whomsoever received—was always faith in Messiah promised, and therefore *saving*, as was Abel's. Faith in God that came short of faith in Messiah was no faith at all; it was not that which the apostle defines. For the whole Epistle to the Hebrews, of which the eleventh chapter is, in part, the conclusion, is to show that not only is Christ superior to Moses, to Aaron, and to angels, but that he is God—the *Elohim* and the *Jehovah* of the Old Testament. Wherefore the believer's faith now comprehends not only the Elohistic, or abstract idea of God in *Elohim*, but the Jehovistic, or concrete, personal idea in *Jehovah*, and in God the Son and God the Holy Ghost—the Triune God of a completed revelation. And if so, "things hoped for" and "things unseen"

now include all the promises of the Triune God, as they too were gradually and progressively revealed. Abel had before him neither all that God revealed of himself, nor of things to come, that Abraham had; Abraham knew not all that rapt Isaiah knew; nor could Isaiah, although his lips were touched with a live coal from the altar, tell all that was disclosed to St. John. But Abel received by faith all that was revealed to him—so of Abraham, so of Isaiah, and so of St. John. And yet all things embraced in the promises, from first to last, known or unknown, revealed or unrevealed, were no more St. John's than they were Isaiah's, or Abraham's, or Abel's. If God has "provided some better thing for us"—if we have seen the fulfillment of promises that were unfulfilled to them—and if the Old Testament saints "without us" could "not be made perfect," yet are they equal heirs of the promises. For every believer in the Lord's vineyard, from Abel till now, receives every man his penny.

Now as "things hoped for" and "things unseen" embrace all in the promises, they may all, at every stage of their disclosure, be summarized and comprehended in three words—pardon, holiness, and heaven. For there is not a promise which does not have direct or indirect reference to the forgiveness of sins, final acquittal at the last day, restoration to the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, and to the inheritance of the saints in the heavenly Jerusalem. And there is not a promise of these that is not attended by some special promise, expressed or implied, to give all needed strength and grace to make them faith's, and faith's forever. The believer knows that his sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, and that if he remain faithful unto death, he will be justified, at the last day, in the presence of men and angels. He is persuaded that he is created anew in Christ Jesus, that his blood cleanseth from all sin, and that he shall behold his face in righteousness and awake

with his likeness. He knows that if the earthly house of his tabernacle be dissolved, he has a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens—that a city is prepared for his reception, and a mansion for his abode. And as one here embarks on board a steamer, knowing that if he lives, if the winds and the seas are favorable, and there are no accidents by the way, he will, though he has never seen them, cast anchor in the Mersey, and with his own eyes behold the docks, and with his own feet walk the streets of Liverpool, the world's great commercial metropolis; so by faith the believer confidently expects, when he starts upon the heavenly voyage, if he continue loyal to his pilot, he will, safely guided over life's tempestuous seas, surely behold the city of God, walk its golden streets, see the King in his beauty, stand in the presence of the beatific vision, and be ever with and like his Lord. To him, even now, "things hoped for" and "things unseen," are no "cunningly devised fables," but substantial realities, confirmed by evidence having all the conviction and all the assurance of the most positive and approved demonstration.

The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews the apostle has devoted to the illustration of the faith which he defines. In that chapter of inimitable force and beauty—which has the strain and the ring of a battle-song of victory—are recorded faith's trials and conflicts and triumphs, illustrated by the life and death of many an Old Testament worthy. And it is more than a record of these; it is an historic epitome of faith's discoveries, or of revelations successively made to it. For whether the apostle intended it or not, he has given the order of the most important divine disclosures affecting man's present and future, all of which were gradually and successively revealed to men of preëminent faith. The most distinguished were rewarded by the discovery or revelation of some new truth, or fact, undiscov-

ered or unrevealed before. For the things affecting man's present and future were not made known at once. Neither did God at once disclose all of himself and his worship. Many were the disclosures he made of himself before he was God manifest in the flesh. And many were the changes in worship before the world was prepared for the announcement made by our Lord to the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, in Sychar. It passed successively through altar, tabernacle, and temple, before every place sanctified by the prayers and faith of the worshiper became the house of God and the gate of heaven. The simple patriarchal altar of heaped-up earth or unhewn stone gave place to the movable and deftly curtained tabernacle; the tabernacle itself disappeared before the more permanent and splendidly elaborated temple on Mount Zion; and the temple itself, with its grand and imposing ritual, went down before the upper chamber, and the house of Mary the mother of Mark in Jerusalem, the house of Cornelius at Cesarea, the *proseucha* by the river-side near Philippi, and wherever the people met for prayer and praise and to hear the preached word. Thus gradual and progressive likewise were the disclosures made to faith.

If one may so speak, there is a golden thread, strung with many a goodly pearl, running through the eleventh of Hebrews. Each pearl we call a new discovery of faith, or a new revelation made to it. Following up the thread, let us look at some of its precious pearls.

The Book of God opens with the sublime declaration: "In the beginning God [*Elohim*] created the heaven and the earth." In the plural *Elohim* faith recognizes three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—for "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;" and by the Son "were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or



dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." In the singular verb *bara*—created, brought into existence something not previously existing, or into entity from nonentity—joined with the plural *Elohim*, it sees the Trinity in Unity, three Persons and one God. And in *eth hashamayim veeth haarets*—"the heaven and the earth"—it discerns the whole solar system, all things in sky and earth. For "*through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*" And so creation, by creation's great Author, was revealed to faith, and to faith alone. Faith first received it, faith first declared it, and hence, speaking *populariter*, faith first discovered it.

It will be noticed that the creation, or genesis, of material things is not revealed to the faith of any one individual of the human race. Through faith, not from reasoning, we—that is, all believers—understand (*γνοῦμεν*, arrive at the perception) that the worlds (*τῶν αἰώνων*, the material universe) were framed (*κατηρτίσθαι*, set in order, adjusted, arranged), not out of materials previously existing, but out of nothing; so that by the word of God (*ῥήματι θεοῦ*, by the fiat of God) the material things which we see were brought into existence and arranged as they do now appear. This perception of the genesis of material things, coeval with the creation of man, and doubtless communicated to him by the Creator when he placed him in the garden, is received by all who have faith in God. It was no mere fancy which made England's great epic poet represent our first parents beginning thus their orisons in Eden:

*These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,  
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,  
Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then,*

*Unspeakable! who sitt'st above these heavens,  
To us invisible, or dimly seen  
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare  
Thy goodness beyond thought and power divine.*

For Milton was among the *we* who, through faith, understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. And so all who receive inspiration's account of creation sing with the psalmist:

*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;  
And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.  
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For he spake, and it was done;  
He commanded, and it stood fast.*

And faith accepts the whole record, especially what is said of the creation of man: "*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*" Here in the Bible, and in the Bible alone, is the only true genesis of the material universe and of human life. To the omnific power of the almighty personal God of the Hebrew Scriptures faith ascribes all matter and all life, and not to blind chance, to first atoms, to molecules, or to protoplasm. Full grown, and perfect of body, and limb, and senses, and mind, and spirit, came forth man from his Creator; and equally perfect the material things made ready for his uses. And the latter required no greater omnific power than the former. But suppose the full bones of the first man Adam were now in complete preservation, and in the hands of the modern evolutionist. He would tell us of the time when the embryo was in the mother's womb; he would not only trace its development through infancy and childhood up to full manhood and old age, but he would tell us how the race from which the embryo sprung is traced back to the ape in ages millions of years before the Mosaic cosmogony. And

yet the Scriptures, which have been confirmed to us by ten thousand signs following and producing the conviction of demonstration, assure us that the Lord God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils, the breath of *lives*, and made him a living soul.

Which shall we believe? Over three thousand years infidel science has been arrayed against the Holy Scriptures, but arrayed in vain. For never were the number of believers so great upon the earth as at this day of advanced science. Once a single family, and once seven thousand, were all in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal; now the believers in the personal God of the Bible are numbered by millions, embracing thousands of the noblest, the purest, the most cultured, and even the most scientific of earth. Who would change the revelation of God for the hypothesis of man? For what is the science which opposes the Bible but the mere hypothesis of the vain Ego? And what is the latest hypothesis? Is it final? is it positive? is it not soon to give place to another that shall itself shortly be exploded? Take geology, the most fixed, the most confirmed of the sciences. Listen to the wail which came from a late gathering of the savans of modern science, that even in geology nothing positive is known; that what is now known is but an hypothesis, which further investigations may utterly repudiate. And no wonder; because God alone can reveal to us the secret things of creation. He has revealed them to us, and by whom they were made; we receive the revelation, we accept it, and with implicit faith we act upon it.

The infidel scientist who vainly believes that he alone is worthy to be classed among the number of "thinking men," though "continually forced into agnosticism" is "yet constantly forced into some solution of the Great Enigma," notwithstanding he "knows" that it "cannot be solved." Such

is the late confession of Mr. Herbert Spencer. "Especially must this be so," he bewails, when one "remembers that the very notions, origin, causes, and purpose are relative notions belonging to human thought, which are probably irrelevant to the Ultimate Reality transcending human thought; and when, though suspecting that explanation is a word without meaning when applied to this Ultimate Reality, he yet feels compelled to think there must be an explanation." If this be agnosticism, it is confined to labor in one eternal treadmill; and the "Great Enigma" into whose solution it is "constantly forced," and the "Ultimate Reality" whose explanation it is incessantly compelled to seek, must forever deceive and elude its best and most persistent search. The thirst of Tantalus and the labors of Sisyphus in Grecian legend were as easy of gratification or performance as the struggles of the Egos of agnosticism to solve the "Great Enigma," and arrive at the "Ultimate Reality." After all, Mr. Herbert Spencer has recently confessed that "one truth must grow ever clearer, the truth that there is an inscrutable Existence everywhere manifested, to which he can neither find nor conceive beginning or end. Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he is ever in the presence of an infinite and eternal Energy, from which all things proceed." This "infinite and eternal Energy" which the proud infidel Ego seeks, if haply he may feel after it and find it, but which, though it be not far from every one, he seeks in vain, faith discloses—the God that made the world and all things therein, the Lord of heaven and earth, who giveth to all life and breath and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.

What can modern infidel science give in exchange for Jehovah-God? What has the belief in molecules, protoplasm, self-moved and self-positing atoms done for the human race in comparison with what faith in the Lord God of Israel has done for it? If faith in the personal God of the Bible be as baseless as a dream or fleeting vagary, it has inspired the loftiest and most heroic thoughts; it has exalted humanity; it has given to millions victory over self; it has subdued dark and fierce passions; it has changed the raging lion and the rapacious eagle into the patient lamb and gentle dove. It has made the vicious, the idle, the profligate, the thief, the seducer, the murderer, the perjured, the drunkard, and the abominable good, industrious, virtuous, honest, chaste, forgiving, true, sober, and pure. It has given peace to the guilty conscience, comfort in affliction, rest in trouble, joy in sorrow, strength in temptation, confidence in man, love to our neighbor and to our enemy; benevolence, beneficence, and liberality toward the needy and distressed; hope in despair, and triumph over death. O what hath not faith in God wrought for the human family? If it is a delusion; if there is no God; if the soul is not immortal; if there is no hereafter—no heaven, no hell; if body and soul perish together at death; if faith in God and in his only-begotten Son is a mere conjecture; if “things hoped for” and “things unseen” have neither foundation nor demonstration—is he a benefactor to his race who dispels the sweet delusion, who surrenders what has resulted in unspeakable blessings to millions to a cold, lifeless, unsympathizing hypothesis, which, if universally received, would make earth a pandemonium, a hell, a charnel-house, a Golgotha? If faith in God is a delusion, we will not exchange it for anything infidel scientists can offer. If it is a mere hypothesis, it is an infinitely better hypothesis than theirs. The believer in Jesus has rest in trouble here; and beyond the

grave, if all be forgetfulness or annihilation, his fate, though he be but a simpleton here, will be no worse than that of the ablest infidel scientists there. For "their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." For if ours be true and theirs false, they have no hope here or hereafter. If, then, the choice is between conjectures, give me the conjecture which makes me better, happier, wiser, and more helpful to my fellow-sufferers in a life that shall end in one common oblivion. But, glory be to God, we follow no mere hypothesis! We believe, and therefore speak. And if the proud skeptic and infidel scientist would do what he challenges us to do—bring to the test of experiment, which its great Author demands, the truth of his religion—he too, as thousands of like opposers have found, would know of Christ's doctrine that it is of God, and not of man. For the Lord who answered by fire on Carmel, he is the God! he is the God!

Whatever others may do, we avouch the God of Elijah to be our God, assured that the worlds were framed by his word, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Persuaded of things hoped for and of things unseen, and embracing them, we confess that we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, desiring a better country—that is, a heavenly. In the God of the Bible, and in all his revelations to man, we implicitly trust; and trusting, we both rest and act, agreeing with Kant, the greatest of German philosophers, at least in this, that "without a God, and without a world invisible to us now but hoped for, the glorious ideas of ethics may indeed be objects of approbation and admiration, but cannot be the springs of purpose and action."

We have said that faith accepts the whole record God has made of the creation of man. It receives as truth that God made man in his own likeness; that he made him the

subject of law; that man, who was a free agent, disobeyed that law, lost the image of God, and incurred the death-penalty. Faith beholds him guilty, polluted, wretched, lost. It asks, How can the guilty be forgiven, the fallen be raised, the unclean be cleansed, the lost image be restored, the forfeited paradise be regained? It hears the voice of the Lord God in the garden pronouncing a curse upon the transgressors, and is sore afraid. But it hears the promise that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and takes courage. It believes God's word; it looks to the promised seed; it looks and lives! Faith discovers pardon for sin, and cleansing for guilt. It discovers the necessity and efficacy of the atonement; it offers the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit; it cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and is forgiven. For "*by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.*" And thus the second grand discovery of faith was made—that by faith in the promised Messiah there is forgiveness for the humble and contrite.

But the forgiven and accepted Abel, slain by his sinning, proud, and disappointed brother, dies, and dust returns to dust. This is the first death in the human family. What became of Abel after death? Was it the last of him? If a man die, shall he live again? Is there a soul separate from the body? If so, does it perish with it? or does it live on after death in another state of existence? And if there be a future for the soul, is there a future for the body? When worms destroy the body, when it undergoes the corruption of the grave, when it is burned and returns to ashes and gases, can the scattered particles be collected together again, and the body, which rotted in the grave or was consumed on the funeral-pyre, be restored? Faith in

God and his promises gives the ready answers. There is a resurrection for the soul, and there is a resurrection for the body. For "*by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*"

The translation of Enoch disclosed to faith, for both soul and body, a future beyond the tomb. No human reason discovered it; faith alone discovered it when God bore Enoch, without dying, away from earth. It was afterward powerfully assured by Elijah's ascension in the chariot of fire; and it was forever confirmed by the triumph of the Lord Jesus over death and the grave, by his ascension to heaven, and by his promise that the dead who sleep in him shall be raised with bodies "fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Glorious discovery of faith! What could never have been more than a conjecture is now a matter of certain revelation. The best and wisest of the old philosophers, apart from a divine revelation, only conjectured a future for the soul. It was Seneca who said: "It is that which our wise men do promise, but they do not prove." It was Socrates who said: "I hope to go hence to good men, but of that I am not very confident; nor doth it become any wise man to be positive that so it will be. I must now die, and you shall live; but which of us is in the better state, the living or the dead, God only knows." And it was with reference to this uncertainty of a future life Cicero despairingly cried: "Which of these opinions of the philosophers is true, some god must tell us; which is most like to truth is a great question." The infidel historian of "The Decline and Fall," remarking on these speculations of the philosophers, tells us that "they might serve to amuse the leisure of a philosophic mind; or,



in the silence of solitude, they might sometimes impart a ray of comfort to desponding virtue; but the faint impression which had been received in the school was soon obliterated by the commerce and business of active life." And hence he adds: "There is nothing except a divine revelation that can ascertain the existence and describe the condition of the invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body."

Such were the speculations of philosophy respecting the immortality of the soul. What, then, shall we say of the resurrection of the body? Of the former the wise men had some intimation; but the latter had no place whatever in their convictions, if indeed, before Jesus and the resurrection was preached, it entered into their thoughts. Perhaps not even by those who had direct communication with the revealed God of the Scriptures was the thought conceived before the translation of Enoch. From that moment the resurrection of the body, as well as the immortality of the soul, was indeed added to the great discoveries of faith. But whether it was afterward generally known, and commonly received, by the Old Testament saints, is not disclosed with sufficient clearness. To Enoch, doubtless, as the reward of his close and intimate walk with God, it was first revealed. He believed it, and because he believed it, he was further signally rewarded by his translation from earth to heaven. It is generally believed, notwithstanding the efforts to throw discredit upon the rendering of our Authorized Version, that the resurrection of the dead was known to the patriarch Job, when he replied to his accusing friends: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." The psalmist must have known it when he prophesied of Christ:

“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” And it was revealed by the angel to Daniel, in a vision, by the side of the great river Hiddekel; to him it was foretold that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” But however and whenever revealed, it was a discovery of faith, more than adumbrated by the translation of Enoch and Elijah, and forever demonstrated by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

We have seen that, from the first, man was made a free agent, and the subject of law. We shall now see that such he remained after grace provided an atonement for his sins, and through faith restored him to the Divine favor and image. From the obligations and sanctions of law grace did not deliver him; obedience to it was always expected, and always demanded. Life to the obedient, and death to the disobedient, was the law of the great Creator and Ruler of the universe, and the sanctions by which it was enforced. While merciful to the penitent, there never was a time when the Holy One could look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. Hence when “God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth,” he swept away the ungodly by a flood, saving only righteous Noah and his family. *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house: by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”*

Noah believed God’s word, and acted upon it, notwithstanding the severe tests to which he was subjected. One hundred and twenty years he was building the ark amid the jests and scoffs of the infidel scientists of his day, who, perhaps, dinned into his ears that nothing like the threatened flood had ever happened; that it could never occur,

because nature's laws had always been, and ever would be, uniform; that it was impossible to cover the hills, much less the mountains, with water; that if it were possible, no clouds could bring sufficient rain. But, it seems to us, that this was not the severest test which the faith of this preacher of righteousness had to undergo. One hundred and twenty years he faithfully preached to the wicked of his day; faithfully he warned them of the coming flood; terribly in earnest because he knew it was coming, he zealously exhorted them to repentance and faith in God. And yet not a single soul was converted by his preaching; not one believed his report; they perished before his eyes while the ark was floating securely upon the flood.

It was given to Noah's faith that he and his family were saved. And though no one hearkened to his warnings, and he saw no fruit of his preaching, he became "heir of the righteousness which is by faith," and greatly helped to strengthen and confirm the faith of millions who came after him. Nor was this all. There were precious discoveries which his faith revealed. Among them we may mention these: That God's law is of perpetual obligation, and cannot be violated with impunity; that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth over men on earth, and controlleth the forces of nature; that in the rainbow, which he set in the clouds, he has given the sure pledge of the general stability of nature's laws, and that, according to promise, he will no more destroy this world by a flood; that in the punishment of the ungodly, and in the reward of righteous Noah, we know the certainty of the final judgment, when God shall punish the wicked with everlasting destruction, and shall reward the righteous with life eternal; and that, in the overthrow of the ungodly by water, we see the sure fulfillment of his purpose to destroy this world by fire. "The Lord, he is the God! the Lord, he is the God!" proclaimed by the thou-

sands of Israel on Carmel when fire from God out of heaven fell on Elijah's sacrifice, shall be thundered by all the angelic hosts of heaven, and by all the redeemed from earth, while the heavens, being on fire, are dissolving, and the elements are melting with fervent heat.

The immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body we placed among the discoveries of faith. Abel died, and Enoch was translated. But what became of them after the death of the one and the translation of the other? Faith answers the question, and tells us whither they went and where they now are. *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*

The earthly Canaan, to which he was called to go, was the type of another and "a better country, that is, a heavenly." In the former he lived as a stranger and pilgrim; in it he had neither house nor land—"no, not so much as to set his foot on"—except the spot he bought as a burial-place for his wife. In it he, his son, and his son's son—heirs with him of the same promise—sojourned in movable tents suited to their pilgrim and nomadic life. By faith he knew that the earthly Canaan was only his temporary sojourn, and the type of the heavenly to which he was journeying. In the Canaan above he saw by faith the beautiful city of which the great Creator of the universe is both the architect and maker. There was his house; there was his home; there his eternal abode; and there the heirs of the righteousness which is by faith are taken. There Abel had gone; thither Enoch was translated; and there, in the city which

hath foundations, is the rest which "remaineth to the people of God." And thus the invisible and heavenly Canaan was disclosed to the telescopic eye of Abraham's faith, and was added to faith's great discoveries.

But the faith of Abraham was not without its trials; nor is the faith of any of God's dear children here. Probation does not end, but fairly begins, when faith is accounted for righteousness. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," is the command and the promise. In this world the faith of the saints is tested by temptations. And of them there are two kinds—those which come from God and those which come from Satan. It is said that God did tempt Abraham; but it is also said, God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. Moses affirms the one, St. James the other. Both are true. For temptation has a primary and a secondary sense. In the first, it means to try a thing, to put it to the test; in the second, it means to entice to sin. In the former sense, God tempts—that is, tries the faith of his people; in the latter, he tempteth no man; but every man is tempted to evil when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. The one God brings upon us; the other he permits. But both are under his control. For "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. And we have his pledge that he will not bring, or suffer any thing to come, upon us requiring angelic virtue to resist. His grace is sufficient; renewed human nature, through Christ Jesus strengthening us, can do all things. "And as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Temptations, when they come, and no matter whence they come, are designed to strengthen

and purify faith itself, to make us wiser, better, and fitter for the heavenly inheritance. And when they come upon the saints, it is no evidence that they are sent in wrath; they are pledges rather of a Father's love. They are for their good; they are meant to discipline them, to make them lean more upon God, to show them the worthlessness of earthly things in comparison with the heavenly, and to develop in them those graces of the Spirit which make them most akin to God and nearer to the likeness of Christ. Thereunto the saints are appointed; hence, to pray to be delivered from them is to pray to be taken out of the world. For as long as they are in the flesh they shall have tribulation. Wherefore, ye saints of the Lord, look to him for deliverance out of temptations, and in his own way. Pray, if you will, for deliverance by their removal, but pray with perfect submission to the will of God. For it is not his only way of deliverance; nor is it his usual method. He may will that they continue; and what he wills is best. For he loves us, and he will not remove them until his gracious purpose is accomplished. Wherefore, endure the cross; despise the shame; drink the cup, however bitter; suffer the thorn in the flesh, if such be the will of God. For your Father desires to melt away the dross, and leave the fine gold, unmixed with any alloy of earth. And such will be the result, if you hold fast your confidence in God and his promises. The trials he brings may be patiently borne by faith through grace; and as to those with which he permits wicked men and devils to assail you, not all the wicked men on earth, nor all the devils in hell, can pluck you out of his strong and loving hands. And of the former he gives the assurance in the triumph of Abraham's faith over the severest trial to which he ever put the faith of a saint. *"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, of-*

*ferred up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called, accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."*

It was hard, under any circumstances, to bear the loss of his beloved Isaac. It was infinitely harder to take his life by his own hands. For all things human pleaded and revolted against the deed. But obedience was Abraham's law. About the command he could not be mistaken. For God, who had often conversed familiarly with him, commands: "*Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*" The patriarch knew what "a burnt-offering" was—that it required the death of the victim and the burning of the body. It demanded the strongest and most heroic faith, even if Ishmael, and not Isaac, had been the victim. But the victim was Isaac, the miraculous child of his old age, and the son of promise, of whom it was said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Here comes the true test of Abraham's faith. He is commanded to slay the son of promise, and to slay him before Isaac had a son of his own. But Abraham's faith assured him that God had not changed his mind concerning Isaac, and taken the banished Ishmael into favor. And he knew that Isaac was not displaced by another son yet to be more miraculously born to himself and Sarah, when both were much farther advanced in years. For he knew that in neither case could God be true to his word; for the promise was to Isaac, not to Ishmael; to Isaac, and not to some unborn son of Sarah. How could God be true to his word, if Abraham, before there was any chance of its fulfillment, slay the son of promise? Abraham staggered not through unbelief. Faith saw the way out. For the promise in Isaac

would be fulfilled, even if he should be slain. What if, with arm uplifted, the father strikes the fatal blow; what if he applies the fire to the wood; what if the fire consumes the wood, and reduces the body to ashes and gases; and what if the four winds of heaven scatter them to the four corners of the globe? What of all this? The patriarch, before one had been raised from the dead, knew that God would collect the scattered ashes and gases of the consumed body, and give Isaac back to him from the dead. For he was persuaded that God would raise him up, even from the dead; and from thence he received him in a figure—that is, Abraham received him as if from the dead; for his purpose was to slay him. But the patriarch's God took the will for the deed. A ram, caught in a thicket by his horns, was provided in the place of Isaac; and a new name, Jehovah-jireh—the Lord will provide—was discovered by faith. And thus another discovery was added to faith's great triumphs—God will bring no temptations upon his saints, out of which he does not provide a way to escape.

And faith discovers that equally gracious and provident is God in those fiercer and darker temptations with which Satan assaults his saints. Here, too, no temptation can take us, out of which God does not provide deliverance. Faith in God gives the victory over all the attacks of hell. By faith, through grace, the saints may overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. The word of God is pledged to deliver the godly out of both kinds of temptation. As he delivered Abraham out of the severest of the one, he delivered Moses out of the severest of the other. *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than*



*all the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."*

Saints of God, can he bring upon you a severer trial than that which he brought upon Abraham? And can he allow Satan to assail you with a greater temptation than that by which Moses was tried? Have you been called upon to slay a son? Have you had to decide between princely power and fame and riches on the one hand, and shame and reproach, and affliction and poverty, on the other? Bless the Lord, ye his saints, that Abraham's faith and Moses's faith have forever proved that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

But it may be said that God's commands are not only sometimes grievous, but sometimes impossible to be done. It is unbelief that so speaks, and unbelief alone. For God never commands the impossible. Does he not know his own strength, and what we can do through him? Is he ignorant of the power of his own grace? Is he so unwise as to require what he knows we cannot do? And is he so cruel as to punish us for not doing it? His commands may sometimes be grievous, but they can always be borne; they may be difficult, and to unbelief impossible, but to faith they are possible. Faith obeys, and leaves all to God, fully persuaded that it can do whatever he orders. For "*by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.*"

In another place we asked, What more seemingly impossible than to take, by the means Joshua was required to employ, a walled city, fortified by nature and art, and defended by mighty, brave, and war-like men? And yet, by simply walking around it as directed, Joshua took it without munitions or engines of war of any kind. On

the last circuit, when the priests blew with their rams' horns, and the children of Israel shouted with a great shout, the walls of Jericho fell down flat, and the city was taken. Could any command be seemingly more impossible? Have we not in the faith, the obedience, and the success of Joshua the divinest assurance that no command of God is impossible?

And if these things be so, shall our faith stagger at such commands as these: "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength?" And shall our faith waver, seeing that these commands are backed by such exceeding great and precious promises as these: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;" "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them?" And has he not said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness?" "Come, now, and let us reason together," saith the Lord of hosts; "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And of our blessed Lord it is said, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And cannot our God save the hardest case? and is it not revealed

to us by faith that he can? It is; for "*by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.*"

Such are the discoveries of faith. But what shall we more say? "*For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*"

We have gone through with the eleventh of Hebrews, than which there is nothing more important, more interesting, and more eloquent in all the Scriptures. It only remains for us to conclude its inspired author's discussions of faith with a mere statement of the following rich lessons drawn from it:

1. If they who received not the promise—that is, its fulfillment in Christ the promised seed—obtained a good report through faith, much more should we have faith, seeing that, by its fulfillment to us, he has provided some better thing for us, having given us the assurance, by his resur-

rection from the dead, that his sacrifice has been accepted, and that therefore the faith of the patriarchs, now made perfect, or complete, is changed to full fruition.

2. Our faith should be much greater than theirs, since the ancient worthies, who accomplished so much through faith in Messiah promised, are now looking on from heaven as witnesses of the race we are running, cheering and urging us on by their examples—not as mere spectators, such as were the great majority of those who beheld a race in the Greek stadium, but as successful contestants, every one of whom had run for the heavenly prize, and been crowned victors in the strife.

3. With much greater confidence of faith we should run the race set before us in the gospel, seeing that Christ, who for us bore the cross, despised the shame, endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and, in his conflicts with Satan, both in the garden and on the cross, resisted unto blood, striving against sin, is now set down at the right-hand of the throne of God, angels, and principalities, and powers being made subject unto him.

4. How patiently and perseveringly, therefore, we should run, laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, with eyes always fixed upon the goal, and looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

5. How encouraged we should be to endure trials and to suffer chastisement, however grievous, because our loving Father, who sends them, deals with us as with sons, and not as with bastards, intending that they shall yield unto them that are exercised thereby the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

6. The rather, therefore, should we diligently persevere, following peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; because if we apostatize from the faith, it will be impossible to recover what we have rejected.

7. And the rather ought we to hold fast our profession of faith in Christ; for we live under a better and more comforting dispensation than the old. The saints of the old had much to alarm and to terrify. They saw sights and heard sounds which made even Moses fear and quake. But under the new there is every thing to attract and to win the heart. The whirlwinds, the earthquakes, the thunders, the lightnings, the blackness, the darkness, the tempests, and the fires of Sinai have been succeeded by still small voices, whispering gentleness and love, from Mount Zion the heavenly Jerusalem, an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, God the Judge of all, the spirits of just men made perfect, Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

8. But while these things are so precious, and so encouraging and strengthening to our faith, the greater will be our loss and the severer our punishment, if we refuse him that speaketh from heaven, and have not grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Awful will it be to make shipwreck of faith, and fall into the hands of the living, but forsaken and rejected God. For our God is a consuming fire. And the Lord that answereth by fire, he is the God! he is the God!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### JEZEBEL.

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WE return to Elijah. When his servant reported the little cloud, we learn that the prophet said to him, “Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.” Witness again his tender solicitude for the humbled king. He delays not to gladden his heart by the announcement of the rain now near at hand; he makes haste to inform him of its coming, that his return to Jezreel may not be hindered. And well may the king hurry, for the little cloud is rapidly increasing and advancing from the sea in the direction of Carmel. Meantime—while Ahab is preparing his chariot—“*the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.*” Through wind and rain the king must ride to Jezreel. On he drives at rapid pace, urging his horses to their utmost speed, fearing lest the torrents, sweeping down the sides of Carmel, interrupt his progress.

But what were the king’s thoughts as on he dashed, crossing wadies already swollen, and mountain torrents rushing down from Carmel? What an eventful day had been the day on the mount to Israel’s idolatrous king! He had witnessed the greatest convocation since he succeeded his father Omri to be king over Israel—perhaps the largest ever assembled in the kingdom. He had looked on when the priests of Baal were defeated, humiliated, and slain. He had been an eye-witness of Elijah’s triumph, of the fire which fell down from heaven and consumed his offering; and he had heard the prophet’s prayer to the Lord God of Israel,

and the shouts of the multitude waking the echoes of Carmel, proclaiming Jehovah to be the only living and true God. Three years and a half before, the bold Tishbite had suddenly burst in upon him in his palace at Jezreel, saying that there should neither be dew nor rain for years but according to his word. And for three years and a half there had been neither in Israel. Its streams had dried up; the withered vineyards and olive-yards had budded not, or prematurely cast their fruits; the sun-baked fields had yielded not to the sharpened plowshares; beasts of burden had died in the stalls, and the flocks in the valleys and on the mountain-sides; and many people had perished for lack of food and drink.

These calamities had been visited upon Israel because of his sins and idolatries. But does Ahab know this? does he feel it? and is he humbled? is he penitent? is he convinced that the Lord is God, and he alone? will he return to the worship of Jehovah? will he root idolatry out of Israel? and if resolved on this, how will he meet Jezebel? will he bear her scorn, when she hears of his return to the worship of the God of Israel? will he be bold to face her wrath when he tells her of the slaughter of the priests? will he, if he cannot bend her to his changed purpose, put away his queen, and send her back to her father Ethbaal? will he dismiss his idolatrous, fawning, flattering courtiers? will he exalt the good Obadiah? will he raise him from the stewardship of the palace to the premiership of the realm? and will he take Elijah, the prophet of God, into his counsels? and will he restore, in all their purity, the ritual of Moses and the worship of Elijah's God? Are thoughts like those suggested by these questions in the king's mind as he hurries toward Jezreel through the blinding rain? as he plies the whip and gives the slackened reins to the toiling steeds, are his thoughts on the startling events of the day? And as

thoughts on thoughts succeed, chasing one another in his perturbed mind, successively darting through it and returning quick as the thunderbolt leaps to earth from the storm-clouds overhead, is one of them the contrast between earth and sky since revisited by the rain, and their appearance in the morning while on his way to the convention on Carmel?

But we have asked enough about the king at present. It is time to return to the prophet, and ask, What became of him after he sent his servant to Ahab to tell him of the instant rain? where is Elijah, and what is he doing? We tell it as the record tells it: "*And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.*" Swifter than the horses in Ahab's chariot, the prophet ran before it, and arrived first at the seat of Ahab's ivory palace. How was it that he was able to run ahead of the horses? and why went he to Jezreel? The answers we reserve for another time and place. Meanwhile we leave Elijah without the gate to enter within with Ahab. With the king we go to the palace, and in his company we meet, for the first time, with Jezebel.

The name of Jezebel we have frequently mentioned; but we have not been brought face to face with her, as with several other actors in the drama of Elijah. What Lady Macbeth is in the great drama which bears the name of her husband; what Goneril and Regan are in King Lear; what Lucretia Borgia is in the legends of poets and romancers; what Tullia is in the legendary story of Titus Livius; and what the younger Agrippina and Valeria Messalina are in the historic pages of Tacitus, Jezebel is in the Hebrew Scriptures. Not that the resemblance is the same in all regards, or that they were guilty of the same crimes; but all alike were cruel, vindictive, unscrupulous, and ambitious; and all exercised, more or less, an evil influence over their husbands. Ahab's queen had not a single feminine virtue,



unless it was devotion to her country and her country's gods. To Phenicia and its religious culture we may well believe that every thing—even the interests of her husband and his kingdom—was subordinated. If she was devoted to her husband, it was more a devotion to Phenicia and Baalism than to Israel's king and realm. And though no charge of wifely infidelity were brought against her by the inspired Hebrew historian, we question the chastity of a woman who, in her widowhood, after her son was slain before her eyes, "painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out of a window," hoping by her personal charms and royal birth to captivate the slayer of her son, and become his wife or concubine. We confess we do not see that intrepidity in the hour of doom, and that bold defiance of the conspirator Jehu, which some have seen in the last moments of Jezebel. Nor are we at all inclined to change our opinion because of her address to Jehu when he entered in at the gate of Jezreel: "*Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?*" For many of the best authorities see in Jezebel's address, not the language of defiance, but the language of conciliation. One of the best of Oriental scholars, after accepting the paraphrase of Jarchi—"If thou hast slain thy master, it is no new thing: for Zimri also slew Elah, the son of Baasha"—tells us that Jezebel's words were rather intended to conciliate than to provoke. And to this the same learned expositor adds: "The words are understood by most of the versions thus: 'Health to Zimri, the slayer of his master!'" This infamous princess and libidinous woman endeavored, by commending and flattering the conspirator Zimri, to win over to herself the conspirator Jehu, who, in her presence, had slain the king, her son.

We have said that we must question the virtue of the Phenician princess and queen dowager of Israel, even if no direct charge of unchastity were brought against her. But

we do see a direct charge in the reply which Jehu made to King Joram, when the latter said: "Is it peace, Jehu?" "What peace," was the answer, "so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts, are so many?" While we admit that the word translated whoredoms may be translated idolatries, the first is its primary and obvious meaning. It may be that it is designedly ambiguous, because it is to be received both in its literal and tropical sense. That her idolatries were many, is unquestionable; that her whoredoms were also many, is more than probable, from the fact that she was a blind devotee of Ashera, the patron divinity of harlots, whose rites were of the impurest and obscenest kind. And the rather do we think that the word is to be taken in its obvious sense, because her witchcrafts are included in Jehu's answer—a term that suggests all embraced in the charge of idolatry. Of the adulteries, the idolatries, and the magic arts of his infamous mother, Jehu reminded Joram before he drew his bow with his full strength and shot the arrow which smote him between his arms and went out at his heart. Hence are we the more inclined to believe, as in perfect keeping with the character and conduct of this wicked, artful, and designing woman, that she essayed to bewitch the slayer of her son to avert her own doom, and gain the ascendancy over the new monarch which she had exerted over three kings of Israel. For the very last thing such a woman surrenders is personal vanity, and the confidence in her personal influence and charms to sway the hearts of men and bend them to her own will. And if such were her thoughts, they were emboldened and confirmed by the assurance that Jehu would gladly accept an alliance with one who was the daughter of one king, the wife of a second, the mother of two, the grandmother of a fifth, the mother of a queen, and who had been, of three successive reigns, the genius and the prop.

But if any thing were wanting to support this estimate of Jezebel's chastity, the epistle to the Church at Thyatira supplies the confirmation. That Church was rebuked because it suffered "that woman Jezebel" to teach and to seduce the servants of God to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Both herself and they who committed adultery with her were threatened with being cast together into one bed of tribulation. From this it is evident that Jezebel was a synonym of lewdness and idolatry. What the true Jezebel was to Samaria the symbolized Jezebel was to the Church at Thyatira. Against the latter two distinct charges are made: she seduced God's servants to commit adultery with her, and she led them into idolatrous practices. From this we see the estimate inspiration put on the character of Jezebel: she was the symbol of all that was lewd and idolatrous in character and practice. There were no means, however dark and infamous, which this female monster hesitated to employ. We have already heard how she tried to exterminate the worship of Jehovah; how she dug down his altars and slew his prophets. Blind zeal for a religion to which she was passionately devoted may be pleaded in extenuation. But in the affair of Naboth's vineyard there is no palliation whatever. In that she displayed her full ascendancy over Ahab, her cruelty, her lying arts, and her essential meanness. Near Ahab's palace was a vineyard which he coveted and wished to add to his royal grounds in Jezreel. But the vineyard was Naboth's. That Jezreelite was unwilling, by sale or exchange, to part with a possession in Israel which he had inherited from his fathers, and which he was forbidden by the law of Moses to alienate. The king, when he was refused, went into his house "heavy and displeased;" and lying down upon his bed turned away his face, and would not eat. When, in answer to the inquiry of Jezebel, "Why

is thy spirit so sad?" Ahab informed her of the reason, she bade him be merry of heart, and promised to give him the vineyard. In the king's name she wrote letters, and sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders of Jezreel, commanding them to prefer against Naboth the charge of blaspheming God and the king. The innocent Naboth, condemned on the testimony of two witnesses—sons of Belial—who had been procured and suborned, was stoned to death. In this one act Ahab's queen was guilty of many crimes. She forged the name and seal of the king; she corrupted by threats or bribery the elders of the city; she robbed an innocent man and his family of their inheritance in Israel; she accused him of a crime which she knew he had not committed; she convicted him upon perjured testimony which she herself had procured; and then wickedly and cruelly murdered him. But perhaps this infamous woman's basest part in the whole transaction appears in the nature of the charge itself. Under forms of the Mosaic law and religion Naboth was robbed and put to death. The crime of which he was accused was an offense under the law which the Lord God gave to the children of Israel. Blaspheming Jehovah, when proved by two credible witnesses, was punished with death. That the idolatrous Jezebel, whose whole purpose was to dethrone him and to destroy his worship in Samaria, should be jealous for his name, was in the highest degree absurd and hypocritical. But she brought the accusation, and she succeeded. As Naboth was convicted of treason and punished with death, his possessions reverted to the crown. When the damning deed was done, the queen comforted the displeased and disappointed king by the announcement that Naboth had died a traitor's death, that now the coveted vineyard was his own, and that he could add it for "a garden of herbs" to the grounds of his royal palace.

We have given, out of the order of events, Jezebel's part in this infamous affair because we purpose to devote this chapter to her and her deeds. Elijah's interference in it will be mentioned here that we may tell her doom. Farther on, and in its proper place, we may speak more particularly of the message which God sent by his prophet to Ahab for his guilty share in plundering and murdering the guiltless Naboth.

Severe but just was the judgment of God upon the execrable queen: "And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying, *The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.*" Terrible but fitting sentence upon one of the most detestable characters in all the annals of crime. It is questionable whether either history or fiction presents a more despicable character than the Phenician princess who was wife to Ahab, and who "stirred him up to do evil in the sight of the Lord above all the kings of Israel that went before him."

God's just judgment was long delayed, but was surely fulfilled and executed to the letter. For years she was permitted to live, and fill up the measure of her iniquity. She outlived the translation of Elijah and the death of Ahab. She was a ruling spirit while her son Ahaziah was king over Israel, inspired his wickedness, and saw his inglorious end. She outlived the reign of her son Joram, the brother of Ahaziah, and the successor to his throne and evil deeds; and she was looking on when he fell, pierced through the heart by the arrow of Jehu, and when his body was taken up, and was cast "in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite."

Not long after Joram's death was Jezebel's doom delayed. The newly anointed Jehu, fresh from the slaughter of her son before her eyes, entering in at the gate of Jezreel, beheld the mother, with painted face and tired head, looking

out at the window of a dwelling by the wall. At his bidding some eunuchs seized her and hurled her down into the street below, her blood sprinkling the wall and the horses of his chariot. Right on went the furiously driving and avenging king, and trod under foot her prostrate, mangled form. But when the deed was done, and "he did eat and drink," Jehu relented, and gave commandment to give her body a decent burial, for she was "a king's daughter." But when they who were sent to perform the service reported that "they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of the hands," the king remembered the word of the Lord which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying: "*In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel. And the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.*"

Such was the end of this bad but highly gifted princess! She had qualities which, if they had been sanctified, and had been exerted in a good cause, would have made her preëminent among women. It is impossible not to sympathize with her passionate devotion to the religion of Baal and Ashtoreth sufficiently to wish that a like devotion to the blessed Christ and his religion might characterize every woman who professes faith in his name. The women of Christendom would soon take this world for Christ, if they had the same zeal for Christianity which Jezebel had for Baalism. Whatever may be said of this "cursed woman," as Jehu called her, every thing was subordinated to her purpose to give the religion, the culture, and the commercial wealth of her own Phenicia to the kingdom of her king and husband. She was true to her country's gods; and it is likely she was educated in all the necromancy and magic arts of their priests. And as her religion was one that had no hold upon the conscience, but powerfully im-

pressed a corrupt imagination, and bewitchingly addressed a depraved æsthetic nature, she was entirely unscrupulous about the means she employed to propagate it. And therein is the wide difference between the true and the false religion. All true Christianity quickens the conscience, purifies the imagination, refines the æsthetic nature, and is advanced only by means meeting the approval of a God of truth and holiness, of mercy and love. As truth and purity, and gentleness and love, are the touch-stones of the true religion, it must be advanced by methods in perfect sympathy and harmony with them. But as falsehood and impurity, and revenge and hate, are the touch-stones of the false, in perfect keeping with these may be its methods. The false "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish;" the true is "from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

But in the propagation of both—the false and the true—zeal is an important factor and efficient ally. Hence Baalism, in the kingdom of Ahab, had in the Phenician Jezebel a powerful confederate. Her high birth, her Phenician culture, her superior talents, her inflexible will, her single purpose, and her almost absolute sway over her pliant husband and king, gave to this foreign princess a mighty influence in Israel. But when to these magnetic qualities and gifts was added a zeal for her religion that knew no bounds, her Baalitic influence in Samaria was nearly irresistible. What it was may be seen in the overthrown altars of Jehovah, in the slaughter of his prophets, in the temple erected to Baal, in the image of Astarte, in the four hundred and fifty priests of the one and the four hundred of the other. It may be seen in the Tishbite's lonely life by the brook Cherith and in the Zidonian city by the sea, in the

secluded cave where Obadiah hid the Lord's prophets, and in the fact that, in all Israel, there were, even after the sacrifice on Carmel, only seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and that they, in secret alone, could worship the Lord God of their fathers.

Thus we see what the zeal of this passionate devotee accomplished for Baalism in Samaria. Ahab, her husband, she subjected to her imperious will; two sons, Ahaziah and Joram, she molded to her own likeness and trained to be kings over Israel; and her daughter Athaliah, the very image and duplicate of herself in character, in gifts, and in blind devotion to Baal and Ashtoreth, she gave to be queen over Judah. From the zeal of this bad woman in a bad cause we may learn what the like zeal of a good woman in a good cause may accomplish. If the women of the true religion were as zealous for its success as devotees like Jezebel for that of the false, Baalism would soon give place to the worship of Jehovah, and the gospel of the Son of God, which is peace on earth, good-will toward men, would soon be embraced by every tongue and kindred and people on the face of the whole earth. For there is no moral or religious influence on earth so potent for good or evil as the influence of woman. The moral and religious character of a people is not what its men but what its women are. For the sons who shape the destinies of a nation are what their mothers have made them. It was said of Alfred the Great that "his mother made him all that he was in his own age, and all that he is to ours." Wherefore, ye mothers and daughters of Israel, take warning from the world's Jezebels and Athaliahs, who were curses to their race. From its Hannahs and Eunices learn what may be done for your sons. Let Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, and Anthusa, the mother of St. Chrysostom, to whose piety and prayers those great Fathers of the early Church were in-



debted for their conversion and for their consecration to God, encourage all Christian mothers early to give their sons to Christ, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Be faithful to the holy and blessed work of training your children for the kingdom of God, and the time will come when no more Jezebels shall arise, and it shall be not possible to say again, "This is Jezebel!"

Not only in the false religion, but equally in the true, may woman play an important and influential part. Under both the old and the new dispensation she was, at times, signally honored of God, and employed to do his work. Miriam, as well as her brothers Moses and Aaron, was inspired to prophesy in the name of the Lord. Deborah, who was a prophetess and a judge in Israel, gave her people rest from their enemies forty years. When Israel was held fast in fetters of bondage by the Canaanites, she inspired the disheartened Barak to strike a blow for freedom, accompanied him to the seat of war when he timidly refused to go without her, and composed the ode of victory which was sung after Jabin's great captain was overthrown in the plain of Esdraelon. And into the hands of a woman the Lord delivered Sisera what time Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, with a workman's hammer, drove the nail into his temples. At a time when Jeremiah, and perhaps Zephaniah, were prophets of Jehovah, and Hilkiah was his high-priest, the prophetess Huldah, who "dwelt in Jerusalem in the college," was consulted to know the meaning of the Book of the Law, which was found in the house of the Lord in the reign of Josiah. A little captive Hebrew maid proclaimed the Lord God of Israel in the house of Naaman, captain of the hosts of the Syrian king, and was the means not only of healing the great captain of his leprosy, but of bringing him to the acknowledg-

ment that there was no God in all the earth but in Israel, and to the purpose to offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto any other gods but the Lord. Judith, according to the apocryphal book which bears her name, slew the victorious Holofernes, and delivered the Hebrews out of the hands of the Assyrians. When the infant Redeemer was presented by his parents to the Lord in his temple, Anna the prophetess gave thanks to God, and spoke of the newborn Messias to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. The woman of Samaria was the first to whom was announced the end of the Jewish and Samaritan ritual; and she was the first to proclaim Messias come to her kinsfolk and neighbors. And when the Holy Ghost fell on the disciples at Pentecost, Peter proclaimed to all that it was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel, that in the last days God would pour out of his Spirit upon all flesh—upon the daughters, as well as the sons—and cause his handmaidens, as well as his servants, to prophesy.

And this prophecy was fulfilled in the apostolic churches. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon the multitude that believed—upon men and women, irrespective of sex; and upon free and bond, irrespective of condition. And women prayed in public; and in public they prophesied in the only sense any one prophesied in that day—that is, they preached Jesus and the resurrection, and spoke freely in the churches about the dealings of God with their souls. Women, no less than men, were commissioned to say, "Come." They were not bishops; they were not pastors; they had not the management of churches. In all that concerned their government they were commanded by St. Paul to keep silence, and were forbidden to usurp authority over the men. But that they were not forbidden by him to pray or to prophesy in public is manifest from the directions which he gave them when they do either the one or the other. They were

not prohibited to do either in the churches; they were only directed not to pray or to prophesy in public with uncovered heads. And even that prohibition, in all probability, was for that day only, and not for all time. It was a concession to the customs and prejudices of the Oriental heathens, to whom the gospel was then preached. The command of the apostle in this matter may have no greater bearing than certain directions respecting marriage. The interdiction was expedient for the times, and not intended for all conditions of society in all ages of the Church. The manifest design of the apostle—whose motto, in things non-essential, was all things to all men if by any means he might save some—was not to offend the customs and spirit of the age in matters where no question of morals or of religious principle was involved. And this he did as a prudential and expedient arrangement, that he might have the readier access to those whom he was trying to save by the preaching of the gospel. His concession, therefore, only went so far as to prohibit women to pray or prophesy in public with uncovered heads, but not to interdict such practices altogether. For the four daughters of Agabus prophesied. And St. Paul himself had women who labored with him in the gospel; so had Clement, and so had others. They were his fellow-laborers, and as such were commended to the churches. To the Romans he writes: "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." The word translated "servant" is *διάκονον*, a deacon, or deaconess, the word being masculine or feminine according to the sex of the person to whom it is applied. This deaconess of the church at Cenchrea—the eastern port of Corinth, on the Saronic Gulf—the disciples at Rome were exhorted to receive as becometh saints, and to assist in whatsoever business she had need of them. But what was a deaconess, and what her relation to the

apostolic Church, may be inferred from what is said of the deacons. While there is no question that the latter were appointed to distribute alms to the poor, and to manage the purely business affairs of the Church, it is equally evident that they preached also. Stephen, the first martyr, and the first of the deacons, lost his life because of the signs and wonders he wrought—equally with the apostles—by the Holy Ghost, and because of the great boldness with which he preached before the slayers and murderers of the Just One. And Philip, who was made a deacon at the same time with Stephen, immediately on his introduction to the diaconate, preached the gospel to the Samaritans; and his preaching was attended by great miracles, and in such demonstration of the Spirit and of power that it was accompanied by a sweeping revival. The deacons were all solemnly set apart by the laying on of apostolic hands. And the deaconesses, as we learn from the earliest constitutions of the Church, were set apart in the same manner.

But, it is said, the labors of the latter were confined to the women. As soon as the distinction arose between the initiated and the uninitiated, they taught the catechumens; they baptized the women; they visited their fellow-women where the men were not allowed to go: in fine, they did, and from the first, for the women whatever the deacons did for the men. Grant all this: they were teachers, and they were preachers. They preached the gospel where the men could not; and there at least they could talk about Jesus and the resurrection, relate their Christian experience, and exhort to repentance, faith in Christ, and holiness of heart and life. But forsooth, if a man were present, though a sinner and a heathen, and willing and anxious to receive the gospel from her lips, she was commanded to keep silence, to hold her tongue, and not say a word for the Master, though, like the prophet, she might feel his word as fire shut up in her bones,

and be weary with forbearing. We do not believe this: we do not believe that, under such circumstances, the four daughters of Agabus held their peace; neither did Phebe, nor St Paul's and Clement's female co-workers. And especially do we not believe it, seeing that St. Paul gave directions how they must do whenever they prayed or prophesied in the churches. Sure we are that Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, was not always silent in the church at their house. It seems that she was as able to teach as her husband. At all events she, no less than Aquila, expounded to the eloquent Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly. The truth is, if women, as well as men, were not baptized with the Holy Ghost, and if they were not qualified and commissioned to prophesy—whatever that means—then the prophecy of Joel was not fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; and if they are still denied the Holy Ghost, and are still forbidden to prophesy, then is it unfulfilled to this day, and the new dispensation is still incomplete.

But the prophecy was fulfilled on Pentecost! There were daughters of Jerusalem, who were then baptized with the Holy Ghost; there were handmaidens of our God, who were then commissioned and qualified to prophesy. The woman-power in the early apostolic Church was a mighty power, and it was used by the apostles for the furtherance of the gospel. And the greatest revival in the Church since apostolic times—the great Methodist movement of the eighteenth century—and John Wesley, the great apostle of that movement, did much to revive and to restore the woman-power to its appointed and appropriate place in the Church of Christ. Susanna Wesley, Selina Countess of Huntingdon, Lady Maxwell, Lady Glenorchy, Mary Fletcher, Hester Ann Rogers, Elizabeth Ritchie, Ann Cutler, Dinah Evans, and many other holy women, were powerful co-laborers with the leaders in that great revival. And since their days the Churches of our

own times are being the more aroused to the importance of the woman element in spreading the gospel at home and abroad. The woman missionary movement of the present day is on this line, is doing wonders, and promises much larger results in the near future. The causes which necessitated the appointment of deaconesses in the early Church exist at this day, and with equal force. At home there is much evangelical work that women can do which men cannot do. For it is not in heathen countries alone women have readier access to women than men. And in heathen lands—especially in Oriental countries—there is a special work for women. To the zenanas of the East let holy women go, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, holding up the cross before their benighted and degraded sisters, and preaching to them salvation from idols and from sin. Let them go with a zeal for God and Christ, such as Jezebel had for Baal and Astarte, and the heathen will the sooner be given to our blessed Lord for his inheritance.

But the woman-power in the Church is by no means confined to women gifted as those we have mentioned. In the humble walks, and in the sweet ministries of life, her power, if not so conspicuous, is much more diffusive and effective. As wife, as mother, or as sister in the family circle and nursery; as a ministering angel in the chamber of the sick, by the bedside of the dying, in the house of mourning, in the home of the unfortunate, in the cottage of the poor, in the asylum of orphanage, or wherever there is human sorrow to be alleviated or human pain to be assuaged; or as a teacher of an infant or a Bible class in the Sunday-school, is the appropriate sphere for a holy woman whose life is consecrated to Christ and his Church. The women who exercise the best and most lasting influence in the Church are not phenomenal women like Miriam or Huldah, but the Hannahs, who consecrate their children to God from the

womb, and the Eunices, who early acquaint them with the Holy Scriptures, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And it was from such as these, holy women "well reported of for good works," who had "brought up children," "lodged strangers," "washed the saints' feet," "relieved the afflicted," and "diligently followed every good work"—those were chosen, who assisted the elders of the Church in the care of their flocks. To the rural home of Mary and Martha in Bethany Jesus retired to rest from his labors in the city; and in the house of Lydia at Philippi Paul and Silas found a refuge and a solace after their scourgings in the public jail. Not more eloquent was the silver tongue of the Alexandrian Apollos than the good works and alms-deeds of Dorcas at Joppa, whose delicate hands were employed in making coats and garments for the needy. The affectionate and adoring Mary, who anointed the head and feet of the Redeemer with the precious ointment from the box of alabaster, did a work that has been told for a memorial of her wherever the gospel has been preached in all the world, and received the noblest commendation—"She did what she could"—it was in the power even of her Lord to bestow. The faith of the Syrophenician woman, honored by a severer test than any to which the Lord Jesus ever put the faith of an apostle, has done more to encourage and strengthen the timid and doubting than the heroic martyrdom of Stephen. The poor widow who, out of her penury, cast into the treasury of the Lord her two mites—"all the living that she had"—gave more than all the rich who gave of their abundance, and has done more to incite others to liberality than Joseph of Arimathea, who provided for the dead body of Jesus a burial with the rich. The women who followed our Lord were the last at the cross and the first at the sepulcher; and a woman was the first to see him after he rose from the tomb, and

the first to herald his resurrection from the dead. It is not the Amazons of this world, or even its Niles, that diffuse the largest blessings to mankind, but the little fountains in the desert, furnishing sweet water and a cool shade to the thirsty and sun-burned traveler; the countless springs trickling down the sides of the mountains, the gentle streamlets and meandering brooks of the meadow and valley, reviving flowers that gladden the eye with their beauty and regale the senses with their perfume, causing the tender grass to grow, and filling the barns with plenty. The Christian mother, who early teaches her child to lisp the name of Jesus—who points the tiny and folded hands of childhood upward to heaven, and trains the young and stammering lips to repeat after her: “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name: thy kingdom come: thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven”—is herself a missionary of the cross of Christ, and, in his great missionary Church, is doing the appointed work of the Master as truly as he who leads the embattled hosts of God’s elect to the conquest of “the regions beyond.” To consecrate her sons and daughters from the womb to Christ and his Church, and afterward, by holy precepts and a godly example, to train them up for his glory, is woman’s noblest work, and holiest duty. And if this be faithfully done by all Christian mothers, with the same zeal for God and the extension of his kingdom with which Jezebel trained Ahaziah and Joram and Athaliah for Baal and his worship, the desert will soon rejoice and blossom as the rose, and the thirsty land become springs of water.

But to return: we left Elijah, after the gathering on Carmel, without the gate of Jezreel, and said we must enter with Abab and go to meet Jezebel. At his palace the king alights, and is soon in the presence of his queen. We may imagine, but cannot tell, the thoughts of Jezebel during the



eventful day on Carmel. How much she knew about the convocation on its summit we are not informed. Neither do we know why she was not there; nor why the four hundred priests of Ashera were absent. We cannot say whether any couriers came and went between Carmel and Jezreel to report to the queen, as they occurred, the events of the day. Had she heard, before Ahab's return, of Elijah's challenge, and the subsequent contest between him and the priests of Baal? This is highly probable, for Jezreel was about twelve miles from Carmel. She may have heard, if there were couriers coming and going, of the failure of the priests, and even of the fire which fell down from heaven. But it is not probable, even if there were such messengers, that they had brought her word of the slaying of the priests. It is more than likely she first learned their doom from the king himself. Ahab, in that matter, was his own courier, and the bearer of his own dispatches. The evil tidings, as best he may, the king must break to his queen.

One may be curious to know how the Phœnician princess met her king and husband, and how she received his account of the events on Carmel and at the Kishon. Did she appear before the king in her best array, with painted face and tired head, attended by her maids of honor, an imposing guard of eunuchs, and a splendid train of men-servants and maid-servants? Did she take the same pains to appear at her best before him, as we have seen she afterward did, when she presented herself at the window before the victorious Jehu? We should like to know how Ahab reported to her the transactions of that day so disastrous to Baal and his priests. Did he, as the record implies, begin with the beginning, and go over them all? did he tell her all about the challenge and the contest? did he describe the altar of Baal's priests? did he recount their fruitless prayers to the sun-god—how they cried to him from the

morning to the evening sacrifice to answer by fire, and how no voice, or sound, or any sign was received in response? did he tell how Elijah mocked them at high noon, and how they cut themselves with knives and lancets, and mingled their blood with the blood of the slain bullock? did he report how the prophet of Israel's God prepared his altar—how he dug a trench about it, and poured water upon it until the trench itself was filled? did he tell how the Tishbite prayed, and how, in answer to his prayer, fire fell down from heaven, consumed his sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and licked up all the water in the trench? did he depict the scene when the people, as one man, fell prostrate upon the earth, and then arose, and rent the heavens with the shout, "*The Lord, he is the God! the Lord, he is the God!*" did he relate how, at the prophet's command, the people seized the priests of Baal, dragged them down Carmel's side, slew them at the brook Kishon, and dyed its waters with their blood? did he say that he himself was present at their execution, and gave his royal sanction to their death? did he confess that he himself, awed and subdued by the fire of Jehovah, and carried away by the shouts of the multitude, joined in the acclaim ascribing sole and absolute sovereignty to Elijah's God? did he acknowledge how Elijah tenderly cared for his wants, and how he prayed on Carmel for the return of rain? and did he describe the little cloud arising out of the Mediterranean—how, at first seen in the distance, it appeared no bigger than a man's hand; how it suddenly spread over the whole heavens; how it burst upon Carmel; and how, through rain and wind and storm, he rode to Jezreel?

If the king faithfully told all that happened on that tremendous day, we may be sure that the queen, though lashed by ten thousand furies, long listened in forced silence, but with deep and passionate breathings, to the fearful recital.

No art but Shenstone's, no genius but Shakespeare's, can portray the rise and fall of that bosom, swayed by the dark and vengeful passions which the failure and death of Baal's priests and the triumph and irony of the hated prophet of God aroused to frenzy. During the progress of Ahab's recital, derision, contempt, scorn, anger, bitterness, gall, hate, rage, defiance successively threw their dark shadows over the changing face of the proud and haughty queen. But when the king's account came to the slaughter of the priests, all her fierce passions, with united and clamorous voices, cried aloud for vengeance. Not even the long delayed and looked-for rain could damp the kindled fires of passion that raged within. The prophet of God, who had slain Baal's priests with the sword, must die. The sentence of death passes lips livid with rage. And when "*Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword, she dispatched a messenger to Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.*" Such is the resolve of Israel's idolatrous and vengeful queen! But God has ordered otherwise. Not a hair of Elijah's head shall Jezebel harm. The life of his servant is precious in the sight of the Lord God of Israel. He will not only rescue his prophet from death by Jezebel's hands, but he will, in due time, translate him ~~that~~ he shall not see death.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

FROM JEZREEL TO THE JUNIPER.

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WE left Elijah at the gate of Jezreel. He had run twelve miles through wind and rain, and arrived there before Ahab. The record says, "*He ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.*" There is nothing in this to prove that he was an advanced courier, or shatir, as the runners before kings' chariots are called in the East. And there is nothing to show that he intended by it any special honor or service to the king. It is a mere statement of fact—he outstripped Ahab, and arrived first at Jezreel. Nor do we see that there was any miraculous power upon Elijah to enable him to outrun the king's horses. But is it not said, "*And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah?*" Yes; the hand of the Lord was upon him then, and it had been, in the most signal manner, from his first appearing to Ahab. But if by this it be understood that Elijah, in the short run of only twelve miles, needed supernatural strength to outstrip Ahab's chariot, we must say there is no proof of it. For was not Elijah an active and hardy mountaineer of Gilead? It is said of the eleven captains, sons of Gad—all Gileadites, who came to David at Ziklag—that they were as "swift as the roes upon the mountains." When David lamented Saul and Jonathan in an exquisite elegy on their death he said they were "swifter than eagles." Not only for a short distance of twelve miles, but of many miles requiring a whole day's running, have shatirs run before the horses of kings. Dr. Kitto mentions the shatir of a Persian king who "accomplished about one hundred and twenty miles in fourteen hours' un-

remitted running; and, instead of finding praise for this, was rather censured for not having accomplished the task in twelve hours." He tells us that, in his day, it was no uncommon thing for Persian footmen to run before their masters on horseback, "even when the riders put their horses to a gallop." "As a general rule," he says, "it is understood that a well-trained footman ought to remain untired fully as long as, if not longer than, the horse ridden by the master." What so great feat, then, had the Tishbite to perform that he must be indued with miraculous strength? Was it a great thing for a mountaineer of Gilead, in a run of about twelve miles, to keep ahead of a heavy chariot drawn by such horses as Ahab's? When Obadiah, just before the contest on Carmel, met Elijah, were not he and the king out hunting grass to keep the royal mules and horses alive? Where, then, was the need of a miracle for such a man as Elijah to beat Ahab's half-starved horses? Our faith never staggers at any real miracle in God's word, however stupendous. But we would feel ashamed to interpose miracle to help Elijah in such a contest, and especially as we do not know how far he had the start, or whether the road was a good one for a footman but a bad one for a chariot, or *vice versa*; or whether it was equally good for both. For all these things must be taken into the account to arrive at a fair judgment. Hence, we will not call in the miraculous until the miraculous is stated, or we know that it is needed. Wherefore, we believe that the saying "The hand of the Lord was on Elijah" has no reference to any supernatural strength the Lord gave to his servant that he might arrive at Jezreel before Ahab. If others could accomplish such a feat without miracle, why not Elijah? Was the mountaineer of Gilead old and decrepid? We see no evidence that the burden of years was weighing heavily on the Tishbite. Hence, we suppose that the saying has signal refer-

ence to the great transactions on Carmel; it was in confirmation of what the prophet affirmed, "*I have done all these things at thy word,*" and to show that in all that followed, until the prophet's translation to heaven, the hand of the Lord was on Elijah. If it were said that the hand of the Lord was on him to enable him to run before the king's horses, the question would be settled. But it has not been so said; it is but an inference to support the opinion that the Lord sent the prophet to do a certain work in Jezreel which, after the threat of Jezebel to take his life, he cowardly failed to do. It is an interpretation that does the greatest injustice to the courage and faith of perhaps the bravest and truest servant the Lord God ever had to do his will. The Tishbite never for one moment wavered in courage or faith. He erred, as we shall see—he even sinned—but not from any failure in either or both. They who hold the contrary, as we think, have utterly mistaken the character and conduct of Elijah in the events about to be narrated.

Elijah and Ahab have arrived at Jezreel. The prophet remains without; the king goes within. We have followed the latter to his palace, and heard his report to the queen of the events on Carmel, and of the tragic scene at the Kishon. We have witnessed the rage of the offended princess when she heard of the slaughter of Baal's priests; and we have heard the impotent threat of vengeance against the prophet of God, who had taken them off. But we must leave the maddened Jezebel to nurse her wrath in secret till the morrow, when she is to witness, as she vainly believes, the appeasing of the manes of the slaughtered priests with the life-blood of the Tishbite. We must leave her, and hurry to Elijah without the gate.

The queen's messenger has found the prophet, and delivered the message of his royal mistress. Elijah is informed

of the death-sentence which the infuriated Jezebel has pronounced against him. Is it not surprisingly strange that Jezebel made known her bloody purpose to Elijah? Where is her deep cunning? Is she bereft of all sense? Why wait till to-morrow? And if she wait, why put it into the power of her intended victim to escape? If the execution is delayed because she wishes to glut her eyes with the torture and death of the hated prophet of God, why did she not send a strong guard to arrest him, and put him in hold? Did she believe that Elijah would quietly wait to be led to the slaughter, and make no effort to avert the threatened doom? Has she forgotten how he escaped when he announced to Ahab the drought? how, for three years and a half, he had eluded her and Ahab's spies and detectives, and baffled all their attempts to find out his hiding-place? Has she not had fresh evidence of the Tishbite's vigor, his powers of endurance, and fleetness of foot? Was it not easy for one to escape who could outrun the swiftest horses in the king's stables? But to make sure of her purpose, why did she not, instead of sending to inform him of the death-sentence, dispatch a trusted executioner with instructions to stab him on the spot, or otherwise take his life in the surest and quickest way possible?

Faith sees the answer to these questions. The Lord God, by whom kings reign and princes rule, who knoweth the hearts of all men, and doeth all things according to his own will, caused the wrath of the queen to praise him, and counterworked its bloody design. Jezebel was blinded by dark and vengeful passions. Her wonted cunning and subtlety gave place to stupidity and folly. Believing that her victim was in her grasp, and that she could delay her vengeance until she could publicly and signally gratify it, she blindly thinks that she can toy with the prophet of God as grimalkin toys with the mouse she has taken before she de-

stroys it. So confident is she that Elijah is in her power she sends him word the night beforehand that his life on the morrow will be as the life of one of the slain prophets of Baal. With the refinement of cruelty she seeks to torture Elijah with a night's foreboding of the awful death awaiting him. Infatuated woman, giving no heed to Jehovah's answer by fire on Carmel and to his terrible judgments at the brook, and impiously daring to pronounce the sentence of death upon his anointed prophet and accredited ambassador! Demented queen, presumptuously condemning him to die, and then stupidly giving him the means to make good his escape! Faith is not so dull as not to see that he who hardened and blinded Pharaoh's heart and eyes hardened and blinded the heart and eyes of Ahab's queen. The timely warning is Jehovah's. God is leading his prophet by a way he does not know now, but which he shall know presently. The hand of the Lord was on Elijah to carry out designs concerning Israel not yet disclosed. From Carmel to Horeb God was conducting Elijah. The route was by Jezreel, but God had no work for his servant within that summer residence of Israel's king.

By secret impulses, over which they have no control, God often leads his prophets. It was not always he made known to them beforehand his full designs. His prophets were often as ignorant of his ultimate purposes as others not his appointed ambassadors. It was not an uncommon thing for prophets, divinely sent, not to know all the objects of their mission. For they only knew as much as God was pleased to reveal. But they knew when God spoke to them, as well when he spoke inwardly as by dreams and visions or an audible voice. Elijah, after Carmel, knew that his road was to Jezreel. But this seems to be all that was revealed. And if so, it was natural to think that God was sending him there to do to Jezebel and



her priests what he had done to Baal's priests. With spirits elated by his triumphs on the mount, the Tishbite bounds before Ahab's chariot. It was this which gave greater suppleness to his limbs; it was this which added fleetness to his feet. Exceedingly jealous for the Lord God of hosts, he hurries to Jezreel, thinking the Lord God has sent him there to put an end to Baalism in Samaria. We have seen that neither Jezebel nor her priests were at the gathering on Carmel. Elijah had summoned them to appear, but they had not obeyed the summons. Jezebel, we know, was not there; and we are sure that her priests were not there, for Baal's priests are the only ones mentioned who took part in the contest by fire, and the only ones led down to the brook and slain. That her priests had escaped the slaughter at the Kishon is evident from the fact that they were alive when Ahab and Jehoshaphat, several years afterward, were about to go up to battle at Ramoth-gilead. They were the four hundred prophets whom the King of Israel gathered together and consulted when he wished to know whether he should go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or whether he should forbear. These idolatrous priests of Ashera and their idolatrous patroness having escaped the execution at the brook, Elijah hastens to Jezreel, knowing that they were equally guilty and equally worthy of death, and believing that they were doomed to perish by his hands. With their death he expected to complete the destruction of Baalism in Israel, and to restore the worship of Jehovah.

When the Tishbite arrived at Jezreel before Ahab, why did he pause at its gate? or why did he not follow the king as soon as he had entered? Because the divine impulse which sent him there stopped him at the entrance. The hand of the Lord was not on him to go within. He was before Jezreel because it was on the way to Horeb. It was not in Jehovah's plans that Jezebel and her priests should

fall by the hands of Elijah. There was, for the present, to be no more answer either by sword, or by fire, or by earthquake, or by whirlwind, or by any other terrible judgment. By other and gentler methods the God of Israel will carry on the contest against Baalism. The Tishbite would have exterminated all idolaters by a single blow. He would have left not one to bow the knee to the *Baalim*. But the Lord determined that there had been enough of slaughter—full enough of blood. The sword, the fire, the earthquake, and the whirlwind must give place to the still small voice of gentleness and love. The work of God's Elijah is done; the way is preparing for the work of God's Elisha. There had been enough of Sinai, enough of the law and its awful judgments; the gospel of peace is about to succeed. Elijah, the exponent of the law of Moses, must be followed by Elisha, the type of the gospel of Christ. The gracious return of dew and rain to parched Samaria indicates a change of procedure. Every thing that happened after their return points to an alteration in the methods of the dealings of Israel's God with Israel's idolatrous king and people.

Elijah is without the gate when Jezebel's messenger announces her bloody purpose. The queen's message the prophet takes as an unmistakable assurance that God does not intend him to use the sword in Jezreel. Wherefore he sees that, whether he goes within or remains before it, it will be at his own peril, and with no promise of Jehovah's protection. He has nothing to do but to leave; for God calls him elsewhere. "*And when he saw that, he arose and went for his life.*" But this he did when he went to Cherith and to Zarephath. To save his life he was hid nearly a year at the brook, and over two years and a half in the Zidonian city. Was he a coward when he fled to either? and yet he went for his life to both. To save his life he

was concealed three years and a half. And yet a braver man never drew breath than Elijah the Tishbite. Whenever God said, "Go, shew thyself to Ahab," he went. Afraid of Jezebel and her priests! Cowed by a woman! He had summoned both her and her priests to Carmel. As he stood undaunted and alone on the mount before the king and his court and his guard, and the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, and a fickle and idolatrous populace, so he would have borne himself had the queen and the priests of Ashera been present. And now had the command of his God been, "Go, shew thyself to Jezebel, and do to her and her priests as thou didst to the priests of Baal," the prophet of God would have leaped for joy at the summons, and the next moment he would have been found in the palace confronting the maddened queen.

But where, we ask, is the command that Elijah should go within Jezreel? Show a "Thus saith the Lord" for it, and not a mere inference. The very thing relied on to prove that there was only carries him to the entrance: "*And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.*" Is this a command to go within, and carry on there the work begun on Carmel? Does any one inspired of God say that it is, or that the prophet was a coward for not entering Jezreel? There was no such command; that there was is all conjecture. Elijah's whole conduct is interpreted to support that inference. This is done in the absence of any inspired avowal of such command or charge of cowardice. And it is done at the expense of Elijah's courage and obedience and faith. For if he had a positive command to enter Jezreel, and disobeyed because he feared the threats of Jezebel, and believed that God would not protect him there, he was indeed fallen; the bravest spirit in Israel became an arrant coward; the man of greatest

faith in one moment shipwrecked and lost it all. The Tishbite was a great and heroic soul in ruins! There is no middle ground. To fail at such a crisis was to fail fatally. No excuse, no palliation whatever, is admissible. If his courage ingloriously failed him, if his faith gave place to cowardly unbelief, he was, at the supreme moment, the greatest failure God ever employed in a great enterprise. And it would have been so declared by inspiration of God. The charge of cowardice and unbelief would have been squarely and unequivocally made, and not been left to conjecture. And though, after proper repentance and humiliation, the prophet may have been forgiven and taken again into favor, the ascension in the chariot of fire and the witness of the transfiguration on "the mountain apart" would have been wanting to the great drama of Elijah the Tishbite. For a much less offense Moses was shut out of the land of promise and was buried "on this side Jordan," and Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of a whale. But neither the God of Israel nor any one inspired to make known his mind brings any charge of cowardice or unbelief against Elijah. The prophet is dearer to the heart of God than ever; and he is dearer because his courage and faith were never truer than before Jezreel. He burned with desire—for he was very jealous for the Lord of hosts—to go within and slay the queen and Aschera's priests. But the Lord would not let him. As Abraham's heroic faith on the mount was accepted as the burnt-offering of his son, so Elijah's before Jezreel was accepted as the taking off of Jezebel and her execrable crew. Nor is the view we are presenting a mere conjecture. If it be, we are entitled, in the absence of any inspired declaration to the contrary, to have an opinion as well as others; and if it be, it is far more in keeping with the grand and heroic character of the Tishbite, and far more consistent with all

his life before and after his running to Jezreel. At all events, if we do no violence to any positive declaration of God's word, we much prefer an interpretation that preserves, in all their colossal proportions, the courage and faith of this mighty servant of God.

*"And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there."* When he saw *that*—the word just italicized is in our version, but not in the original. And when he saw *that*. Saw what? It has been taken to mean Jezebel's purpose to take his life. But does it not rather mean that he saw God's changed method of dealing with the Baalitish problem; that God did not intend to use the sword in Jezreel, and that therefore he was not to enter it; that it was no place for him; that to some new Cherith or Zarephath God was leading him; and that as once before he went for his life from Jezreel, so must he again? Then he knew that he was going to Cherith; now he does not know where he is going. Indeed, by many of the best expositors the words "*he went for his life*" are rendered "*he went whither he would.*" If the latter be the meaning, then nothing is said about going for his life. But it makes no difference which is the correct translation. Let it be that "*he went for his life.*" It is no more a proof of cowardice than when he went to Cherith or Zarephath for the same purpose. Was David a coward when he went to the cave of Adullam, though he fled from fear of Saul? Elijah's flight from Jezreel was no more a proof of cowardice than when St. Paul, let down by the wall in a basket, fled from Damascus; or than when our Lord, before his time was come, withdrew from the pursuit of his enemies. All these things we shall see more clearly as we proceed with the narrative.

Or, let it be that "*he went whither he would,*" which has

been taken to mean he went, not knowing whither he was going. Whether this be the true rendering or not, it equally suits the facts. For Elijah's God, without his knowledge, is leading him by Jezreel to Beersheba, and from Beersheba to Horeb. And at Beersheba he arrives, a town belonging to Judah, and on the extreme southern boundary of the land divided among the twelve tribes. There Elijah left his servant. But why did he leave him there? Some see in it a still further proof of the prophet's cowardice. They tell us that he thought his chance of escape would be better if he were alone; wherefore he dismissed his servant to shift for himself, selfishly intent only on his own safety. Others, more considerate, think that out of kindness he sent him away, being unwilling that the servant should imperil himself for the sake of his master. But we see a very different reason for his dismissal. It was God who sent him away. In it we recognize the further unfolding of God's changed plans of dealing with Baalism. It is the prelude to the grand scenic display soon to be witnessed on Horeb. We will not now write all that we mean; we will only add that the servant was dismissed that another might "pour water on Elijah's hands." Elisha was the one appointed of God to take his place and be Elijah's servant. And why did not Elijah remain in Beersheba, in the kingdom of good King Jehoshaphat, who "*walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim,*" but "*did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord?*" Was he not safe there? Whether safe or not, he has not arrived at his journey's end, whither the Lord God is conducting him. God is leading Elijah to Horeb, and to Horeb he must go. At Horeb, and there alone, will Jehovah make it plain to his prophet why he did not suffer him to enter Jezreel and slay Jezebel and her four hundred priests.

Having tarried in Beersheba a night, Elijah, obeying the divine impulse, arose and went "a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree." Southward into Arabia the prophet went—a country, in its sacred associations, second only to Palestine in Hebrew story. There, in the land of Uz, dwelt the patriarch Job, the man perfect and upright, who feared God and eschewed evil; who signalized his devotion to God by incorruptible integrity, and by the most sanctified patience under suffering. There, in the land of Midian, at Horeb, the mount of God, the Lord God appeared unto Moses, while he kept the flocks of Jethro, "in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush." And it was in this wilderness where Elijah was journeying that Jehovah-God, after their flight from Egypt, by many miraculous providences, manifested himself to his peculiar people. In the solitudes of this desert-wild Elijah stopped when his day's journey was over. Under a juniper—"the white-blossomed broom-tree," so common to the Arabian desert—he sat down for shelter and rest. But there is no rest as yet for the Tishbite. His great soul, deeply and powerfully stirred within, finds vent in passionate plaints to the God of Israel. What mean these plaints? From what cause do they proceed? What are the emotions which war beneath that shaggy breast? And how are they expressed in words? We give the whole record—all that is said: "*And he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.*"

The man who ran from Jezreel because he was afraid to die now pleads with God to take away his life! The coward who set such a value upon life now begs to die! The poltroon who fled from a woman that he might prolong his days now says that he has lived long enough! If cowardice made him flee from Jezreel, he has lived long enough,

and he ought to die. If the man who intrepidly faced such perils on Carmel turned white-livered before the threats of a woman, he ought to be ashamed to live. No wonder the recollection of his disgrace is intolerable; no surprise he courts death to hide his shame. And can the Lord God of Israel look with pity, much less with complacency, upon the coward, the dastard, the poltroon who failed him at such a crisis, at such a supreme moment, in his great contest with the *Baalim*? How is the mighty fallen! The bold Tishbite, whose courage never for a single moment, when the odds were fearfully against him, wavered on Carmel; whose eagle-eye flashed defiance against Israel's king and his minions and Baal's priests and the combined hosts of hell, crying, simpering, whining, like a timid and cowardly school-boy, threatened and cowed by another, and that other—a girl! For such do many represent Elijah the Tishbite to be when he fled from Jezreel, and when he sat, in the wilderness of Arabia, under the juniper. We have not overdrawn the picture; we have presented it true to the life as others have painted him. We have only thrown aside the drapery with which they have sought, patronizingly and apologetically, to hide the coward they have drawn. For what do the thousand homilies mean that have been written condemning but extenuating Elijah's conduct before Jezreel and under the juniper? What is meant by the lessons they have taken from it as a warning to others? What is intended by the many palliations of his cowardice, and the impotent attempts to excuse it? Not all the art, not all the ingenuity in the world can offer one good excuse for Elijah, if he was the unbelieving coward they represent him to have been at the gate of Jezreel. Not all the whitewashing, however skillfully applied, can hide the blemish. If these delineators of the Tishbite are correct, Elijah was the most signal failure in all the sacred



history, and his fall the greatest; for he fell from the loftiest eminence. We repeat, if they are right, Elijah was a great and heroic soul in ruins! And it were a hopeless task to reconstruct from such ruins the grand and heroic prophet who defied Ahab and his confederates on the top of Carmel.

But what shall we say of the faith of the prophet before Jezreel? More preëminently signal had been Elijah's faith than Elijah's courage. Indeed, it was his implicit faith that gave to him his intrepid heroism. It was faith that sustained him by the brook Cherith and in the cottage of the widow woman at Zarephath. It was faith that restored to life her dead son. It was faith that emboldened him to denounce Ahab for his sins, to pronounce the curse on Samaria, and to make the appeal by fire on Carmel. It was faith that made him bold to seize the priests of Baal and slay them at the Kishon. It was faith that shut up the heavens for three years and a half, and brought the rain-cloud out of the Mediterranean. What an inglorious shipwreck of faith if, when God commanded him to go within Jezreel, he fled from it, because he could not trust God to protect him there, as he had protected him once before at Jezreel, and as he had shielded him at Cherith, at Zarephath, and, above all, on Carmel! In a moment the man of the strongest and the most heroic faith—and after such signal triumphs of faith—is full of cowardly unbelief! Away with the thought! We do not believe a word of it. It is a slander upon as true faith as ever appeared in a servant of God.

But this is not all. If Elijah was commanded to go within Jezreel, and failed through cowardice and unbelief, how must we characterize his obedience? What defense can we set up for his disobedience? If he was ordered to go within, he knew it; if he was commanded to carry on the

contest against Baalism there, he could not plead ignorance. Disobedience at such a time was defiance of the Lord God of Israel; it showed that he dreaded the woman Jezebel more than he feared Almighty God. The ambassador, from cowardice and unbelief, failed his Infinite Sovereign, and willfully disobeyed his express and positive instructions at the very crisis of his sublime contest with his enemies. All that was gained on Carmel might be lost at Jezreel. In vain the severe and protracted drought; in vain the answer by fire, and the death-punishment inflicted on the priests of Baal. If he did not know, it ought at least to have been in Elijah's thoughts that by his disobedience the supreme personal God of Israel might lose all that was won by the miraculous and stupendous victory on Carmel, and that the final victory would be claimed by Jezebel and her lying priests. And if these results were brought about through his unbelief, cowardice, and disobedience, how could he expect to be acquitted? What favor could he hope from his God whose cause he had so dastardly betrayed? We insist there is no middle ground here. If Elijah was disobedient, cowardly, and unbelieving, his sin was of the most aggravated kind. It deserved to have had put upon it the stigma of the Divine reprobation. And if his conduct had been such, we may be sure that this would have been done as a potent warning against the unfaithfulness, cowardice, and disobedience of servants so highly honored of God. The Divine condemnation would have been as signally manifested as had been the Divine approval at Cherith, at Zarephath, and on Mount Carmel.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### UNDER THE JUNIPER.

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WE are now better prepared to understand Elijah's complaints under the juniper. Because the hand of the Lord was upon him to go to Jezreel, he concluded that God directed him to go within. Short work the prophet would have made of Baalism in Israel! If the dead praise not the Lord, neither shall any curse him that go down into silence; if they cannot do good, their power to do harm is forever taken away. Elijah was so very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, his righteous soul was so vexed because the children of Israel had forsaken his covenant, thrown down his altars, and slain his prophets, that he would have cut off all their foreign and idolatrous seducers. And of these the most abominable and obnoxious were Jezebel and the priests of Ashera. With highest hopes he ran before Ahab's horses. Encouraged by his splendid success on Carmel, he expected at Jezreel to slay the queen's minions, if he did not slay the queen herself. By his hands idolatry was to be rooted out of Israel; by his hands the temples and idols of the Phœnician gods in Samaria were to be destroyed; by his hands their corrupt and seducing priests were to be slain with the sword. Visions of the restored Hebrew ritual and worship of Jehovah thrilled the prophet of God. One more day's work, and the triumph of Israel's God would be complete; one more day's work, and his enemies in Samaria would be silenced forever.

The flushed hopes of the Tishbite were first damped because the hand of the Lord was not on him to go within

Jezebel. The same divine impulse which sent him there made him pause at its gate. He was as much divinely directed to stop at the entrance—the burden of proof is with those who hold the contrary—as he had been to run to it. His intrepid daring and fiery zeal urged him on to the palace. Chafing from disappointment and mortification by the arrest at the entrance, his failing spirits sunk to their nadir when the same secret power which sent him to Jezebel ordered him, after the message of Jezebel, to leave it, and go for his life. Baffled in his high resolve, and thwarted in his lofty aims, the prophet felt humbled and abased; complaining, petulant, and indignant, he “went for his life,” or “whither he would.” Blindly he went, not knowing whither he was going, or where God was leading him. All he knew was that God had interposed between him and his cherished purpose to destroy all Baalism in Israel by the death of the Phœnician woman and the priests that fed at her table. And as he was not allowed to do that, instead of being cowardly anxious to save his life, he went on his unwilling and divinely constrained journey, praying to die, because he desired no longer to live.

We will not enter into the privacy of Elijah’s thoughts as he traversed the kingdom of Judah and came to Beer-sheba. We will not ask how he passed the night in that extremest southern Hebrew city. Nor will we have any communication with the mortified and saddened prophet as next day he roams lonely along his wilderness route. We will wait till the shades of evening come on, and we find him seated with a heavy heart beneath the umbrella-shaped branches of the juniper, uttering his plaintive cries in the ears of Israel’s God.

Listen to his wail as he requests that death may come to his relief: “*It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.*” What is enough?

The prophet thought he had lived long enough—that his work on earth was done, and there was nothing more for him to do. Why live any longer, if the work to which he had been appointed was accomplished? If the Lord had use for him on Carmel, but none at Jezreel, why should he continue to live? If the Lord would not permit him to destroy idolatry in Israel by the means which he had employed at the Kishon; if the Lord, in his contest with Baalism, had changed his methods; if, in his future dealings with the seducers and corrupters of Israel, judgment must give place to mercy, the stern and impetuous Tishbite concludes that Israel's God has no further use for him. He is petulant—it may be angry—because he was not suffered to have his own way in dealing with the Baalites. Long enough, he thinks, has he witnessed their abominations; long enough has the land groaned beneath the curses which their corrupt practices brought upon it; long enough had the true worshipers of God been hounded and persecuted; long enough had he himself been a fugitive and a wanderer in the land promised to his fathers; long enough had God's worship been polluted with idols; and long enough had a foreign and idolatrous woman and her foreign and idolatrous priests lorded it over God's heritage. These wrongs called aloud for the Divine vengeance. The sword was the fitting instrument to employ for their suppression and destruction. The sword he had used at the Kishon; and the sword he was anxious to use in Jezreel. But the Lord God, before the victory over the *Baalim* was complete, had commanded him to sheathe it. And yet Jezebel and her four hundred priests, who had escaped the slaughter after the contest on Carmel, were still alive and defiant. The unsubdued queen had even threatened his own life. The cursed Phœnician woman and her minions were exultant because the prophet of Israel's God, who had been victorious

on Carmel, had fled from Jezreel to escape her vengeance. The cause of Baal would recover from the terrible blow it had received on the mount. They whose hearts the Lord God had turned back again, and who, after the answer by fire, had shouted, "The Lord, he is God!" would be exposed to persecution and death; they would be disheartened and return to Baalism now that God's prophet in Israel had been compelled to flee for his life. Such we believe were the expostulations of the Tishbite! such were his complaints! Wherefore, he thought he had lived long enough, and requested to die. His plaints were not the plaints of a coward, but the petulance of one not allowed to have his way, and of one indignant because God spared the wicked and idolatrous seducers and corrupters of his kindred and people. To the Tishbite it was an intolerable thing that a faithful servant, who had been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, had to flee from the hated Baalish woman. What a triumph for the *Baalim*! What a disgrace to the cause of the personal God of Israel!

But we see more in the Tishbite's expostulations than we have expressed. Elijah prays that he may *die*. And when he prays to *die*, what does he ask? and why does he assign as the reason that he is no better than his fathers? Is not this an intimation that it had already been revealed to the prophet that he was not to die as his fathers had died? Is it not a hint of the translation, of the ascension in the chariot of fire? Is it not indeed a disclosure of the manner of his departure from earth? Why should he not die? why should he not know the pains of death? His fathers before him had known them, and was he better than they? Why should such a distinction be awarded to him if he was not better than his fathers, if he had done no more than they? For could he be better than they, seeing that the Lord God had just suffered him to be disgraced

before Israel, and before Ahab, and before Jezebel, and before her priests, and before the priests of the *Baalim* everywhere? Was he better than they, since he had equally failed? Was he better than they, seeing that he was not permitted to signalize his prophetic mission by the complete destruction of Baalism in Israel? If he had done no more than his fathers, was he worthy of the promised translation? and did he not deserve to die even as they had died? The Tishbite desired not an honor to which he felt he was not entitled. And if so, was not his request more than the request of mere petulance? That he was petulant there is no doubt. Petulance, and not cowardice, was his failing. But, after all, was not his prayer the request of a great and magnanimous soul? As his work, as he thought, was not completed, it was to him a proof that he had done no more than others, and therefore was worthy of no greater distinction. In truth, he might ask, Was he as successful as Samuel? Had not that mighty prophet of God completely rooted Baalism out of the united Israel of his day? And was Samuel translated? Had he not died? Had he not felt the pains of death as his fathers before him? And was Elijah better than Samuel? Did he deserve an honor Samuel had not obtained? was he entitled to a distinction which but one before him had received? and was it not awarded to Enoch because, in a corrupter age, his walk had been close with God for three hundred long years? As Moses, when Jehovah threatened to consume Israel and offered to make of himself a great nation, magnanimously declined the honor, preferring to die, and to have his own name blotted out of the book of God, so Elijah, declining the honor of translation, asked to die, as his fathers died. Wherefore, though petulant and indignant because his great jealousy for the Lord God of hosts had not the gratification it so intensely desired, was not the prayer of the

Tishbite the prayer of a great, unselfish, and magnanimous soul?

Is there any thing improbable in the supposition that his translation had already been made known to Elijah? It is certain that he knew of it some time before the event. Yea, we know—how long before it occurred we cannot say—that it was revealed to Elisha, and not to Elisha alone, but to the sons of the prophets in the schools at Jericho and Bethel. Wherefore, if it had been revealed to Elijah before he sat down under the juniper-tree in the wilderness, is not light thrown upon his prayer to die? and do we not more clearly understand the reason assigned for his request? Indeed, the prayer to die because he was no better than his fathers has but little significance unless he had been told he was not to die as they died, but, like Enoch, was to be translated without death from earth to heaven.

The wrong application of the saying of the apostle James—to which we have before alluded—has done much to give a false coloring to the conduct of Elijah before Jezreel. It has been applied as he never intended. The saying, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are," has been pressed into service to sustain the charge of cowardice and unbelief. St. James said what he did say for the sole purpose of setting in boldest relief the preëminent faith of the prophet. It was a well-known tradition of the Hebrews—and it had a powerful hold upon the Hebrew mind—that Elijah was more than man. The stupendous miracles of the Tishbite, his marvelous surprisals, his weird and secluded life, and the impenetrable mystery completely shrouding his birth, his parentage, his tribe, and all his history before his first appearing to Ahab, powerfully impressed the Hebrew imagination. It seems to have been the general belief of the later Jews that Elijah was not of earth, but some manifestation of God, or at least some angelic and



celestial visitant, embodied in human form, who had come down from heaven to earth. His sublime translation in the chariot of fire so confirmed and intensified this conviction that they confidently predicted and expected his reëpearance on earth on some mission of extraordinary significance to the Hebrew people. The inspired apostle James no doubt knew of these opinions and expectations of his kinsmen and countrymen. Whether he so intended or not, he corrected these erroneous opinions and guarded against these false expectations when he wrote that Elias was a man subject to like passions as others. He was not divine, he was not angelic, but flesh and blood. He was neither God nor angel, but man. He had no powers, no capacities which showed that he was more than human. Nor does St. James say a single word about the relative strength of Elijah's passions. There is not the slightest reference to any weakness in the prophet. There is nothing from which can be inferred any particular or special failing, or liability of failing. There is nothing on which to predicate a charge of unbelief or cowardice. Though a man subject to like passions as we are, he was a "righteous" man, whose prayer was "the effectual fervent prayer." Every thing said of the prophet by the apostle is commendatory, and only commendatory. There is nothing in the least derogatory in his saying. It is not even hinted that Elijah had ever been unbelieving, cowardly, or disobedient. On the contrary, if Elijah, because of his flight from Jezreel, had been the faithless and disobedient coward he is represented by certain writers to have been, St. James never would have singled him out as a man of preëminent faith, whose prayer so signally withheld and restored the rain. The apostle never would have mentioned him—though his prayer did that which he said it did—if his faith had so ignominiously failed at Jezreel. Such a failure at such a crisis would for-

ever have set Elijah aside as an example of preëminent faith. Whatever they may have been in other regards, David can never be set up as an example of continence, Hezekiah of humility, or Jonah of courage. Be continent as David, humble as Hezekiah, or bold as Jonah, would be as misapplied as to say, Be as believing and as brave as Elijah, if Elijah's faith and courage ingloriously failed him at Jezreel, no matter what they were before or afterward.

When Paul and Barnabas, while the Lycaonians were preparing to offer sacrifice to them as Mercury and Jupiter, cried out, "Sirs, why do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you," were those holy and inspired apostles no better than the heathen of Lystra? When it is said that the Lord Jesus was "made like his brethren," that he was "in all points tempted like as we are," was "in the likeness of sinful flesh," and "was made in the likeness of men," was he no better than we? What do these things mean? Simply this: Paul and Barnabas were men—were flesh and blood—as well as the Lycaonians; and the Lord Jesus was very man—as well as very God—a partaker of human flesh and human blood. As well draw from the above sayings something against Paul and Barnabas, and even against our blessed Lord, as to base a charge of unbelief and cowardice against Elijah because St. James says that he was a man subject to like passions as we are. His saying has not the slightest bearing upon Elijah before Jezreel or elsewhere, other than to show that, though a man, he prevailed mightily with God. If Elias, who was a man of like passions with ourselves, had such faith in God, why may not we? This was all that St. James meant—that, and nothing more.

Elijah has uttered his complaints. The deep shadows of night have settled around him. The man of God, wearied and tired by his long journey, and relieved by unloading

the burdens of his troubled heart, falls asleep at the foot of the umbrageous juniper. For a time, till God's angel awakes thee, sweet be thy sleep, true and bold prophet of God! Men may not understand thee, but the great God whom thou servest knows that no truer or braver heart ever beat in human breast. Israel's God watches over thy slumbers; he has nothing against thee, though thou hast something against him. Yet a little while, and thou shalt know all; yet a little while, and thou shalt know more of him. Hitherto thou hast not known him fully as a God slow to anger and of great mercy. Thou hast known him in the drought, in the famine, in the pestilence, in the storm, in the fire, and in the sword. Thou hast known the thunders and the lightnings of his power. But soon thou shalt know him as the God long-suffering and kind. Soon thou shalt have a far deeper insight into his gospel of peace and good-will toward men. Soon thou shalt learn that his compassions are infinite—that they extend even to his enemies, and that he would win them to himself by gentleness and love; and that thou mayest know this, thy God is preparing thee for a long journey to Horeb. There he will make all plain. Wherefore, while thou canst, sweetly take thy rest, bold Tishbite; for Israel's God has sent his angel to watch by thy rustic couch beneath the juniper, and to supply all needed strength for the long and toilsome journey before thee. In the morning thou shalt gird thyself; and thy God, taking thee by the hand, will lead thee on toward the sacred mount whither he has been leading thee, unconscious to thyself, ever since the conflict on Carmel. For there he has a revelation for thee, and for thee alone of all the men of thy day. On Horeb's holy summit he will open thine eyes and show thee things to come that are to have their full development in Messianic times, when the whirlwind, the earthquake,

and the fire of Sinai shall be succeeded by the still small voice of the Mount of Beatitudes.

While Elijah was sleeping under the juniper, the angel of God touched him, and said unto him, "*Arise and eat.*" There in the wilderness the prophet saw a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. "*And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.*" What an honor Almighty God conferred on a faithless, cowardly, and disobedient servant! And yet there is not the slightest evidence that he was so regarded by the Lord or by his angel. There was no upbraiding of Elijah for his flight. There was not the remotest reference to it. The angel waits upon and administers to him as if he were the most highly approved of Heaven. And Elijah expresses no surprise at the presence of the celestial messenger. No doubt he had received many such visits in the solitudes of Cherith, in the upper chamber at Zarephath, and in the caves on Carmel. What passed between them while Elijah was eating, and before he fell asleep the second time, we would tell if we could. All we know is that, after the prophet had sufficiently slept, the angel, who had kept up his vigils by his side, again touched him, and said: "*Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.*" What journey? Elijah did not know; the God who was leading him alone knew. "*And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.*" As long Moses before him fasted at Horeb; as long after him the Son of God fasted what time he was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### ELIJAH ON HOREB.

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**F**ORTY days and forty nights Elijah went in the strength of the meat baken on the coals by the angel. Was he so long time going to Horeb, which was distant only about one hundred and fifty miles from Beersheba? From the latter place he had gone one day's journey. Hence, if the juniper-tree was on the direct route from Beersheba to Horeb, by that much had Elijah diminished the distance between them. Did it take the Tishbite forty days and nights to go a route of one hundred and fifty miles, shortened by a day's travel? If it did, he must have gone by very easy stages; he must have tarried long by the way, or wandered about in the wilderness. But as it is not said how long he was at Horeb before the Lord appeared to him, it may be that he went directly there, and that much of the forty days was spent on the mount. However this may be, he went forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking. During that long interval the food which God gave him, and which he ate under the juniper, kept up his strength.

In a cave at Horeb, the mount of God, Elijah lodged. If this was his first visit, what memories of Jehovah's dealings with his fathers must it have suggested! It was here—for Sinai and Horeb were used indiscriminately to denote the same mount, or different peaks, very near together, of the same mountain—the Israelites came from Rephidim, in the fourth month after they fled from Egypt. To the Hebrews, in Old Testament times, it was a most holy, ven-

erated, and awful place. This was the mount that burned with fire; on its summit the Lord God descended in thunders and lightnings, in clouds and tempests. It was there Jehovah showed to Moses his glory; it was from thence he handed down the commandments written by his own finger on tables of stone; and it was from thence, after communing with God, Moses went down to the audience of the people in the plain below. While Elijah was lodging in a cave of this mount the word of the Lord came to him, and said unto him, "*What doest thou here, Elijah?*"

It is impossible to tell the homilies, the sermons, and the exhortations on this question put to Elijah at Horeb. Poor Elijah! How his ears must have tingled if compelled to listen to a tithe of the rhetoric and eloquence expended in denouncing the unbelief, the cowardice, and the disobedience it is claimed the question implies! It has been used to whip every poor soul that ever ran away from duty. Whenever one has been found to be where he ought not, "*What doest thou here, Elijah?*" has been dinned and thundered in his ears. And such has been the vehement indignation with which the prophet's conduct has been denounced that they, to whom he has been likened, might have comforted themselves with the reflection, however faulty and sinful they may have been, that they were, after all, not half so bad as Elijah the Tishbite. How often have we heard such applications of the question as these: "*What doest thou, a professed adherent of the Lord Jesus, here in the gambling-room, or haunt of sensuality or intemperance? What doest thou, a real disciple of the Lord, here among those who make a mock at his name and a jest of his religion? What doest thou, a selfish, godless man, here at the table of the Lord with those who truly love and serve him?*" That "*a professed adherent of the Lord Jesus*" be found "*in the gambling-room, or haunt of sensuality or intemper-*

ance," that "a real disciple of the Lord" be seen "among those who make a mock at his name and a jest of his religion," and that "a selfish, godless man" be "at the table of the Lord with those who truly love and serve him," are indeed awful things, richly deserving the sharpest rebukes. But we do not see that the question merits such applications. They result from a misapprehension of the question itself and the prophet's conduct.

Elijah's answer to Jehovah's question is not, as has been thoughtlessly charged, an "attempt at," but a true, just, and complete vindication. It is no answer of "wounded self-love," but an answer sincere and honest. The prophet had nothing else to reply, unless "wounded self-love" had prompted him to attempt a vindication at the expense of truth. "*What doest thou here, Elijah?*" is the question. The reply, as the facts warrant, is as follows: "Thou, O Lord, and thou alone, knowest. I do not know. For thou hast brought me here. Thou hast led me a long way through the wilderness. Thou gavest me meat to strengthen me for a journey thou saidst was too much for me; but thou didst not say whither thou wast leading me. Thou knowest I went from Carmel to Jezreel to cut off the abominable and idolatrous Jezebel and her lying priests, even as I slew the priests of Baal. Thou knowest I would not have left an idolater in Israel to bow the knee to Baal or kiss his image. When I would have cut them off, thou, O Lord, didst restrain me. And when Jezebel threatened my life, thou, who, to save my life, didst send me to Cherith and Zarephath, didst order me to flee from Jezreel. Following whither thou didst lead, I went to Beersheba, where thou, O Lord, didst dismiss my servant—for what purpose I know not—and from thence I went, thy hand leading me, a day's journey into the wilderness. What happened under the juniper-tree thou knowest: for thou didst hear my plaints

when I cried unto thee to take away my life. I was petulant—even angry—because thou sparedest Jezebel and her hated crew, and wouldest not suffer me to slay them with the sword. I appeal to thee, O Lord, whose servant I am, for the truth of these things. For thou knowest I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away. Thou knowest all these things, and dost thou ask, ‘What doest thou here, Elijah?’ Tell me, I pray, thee, O tell me, why thou hast brought me to Horeb.”

Such, in its spirit, was Elijah’s reply. The Lord God does not regard it an evasion or attempt at vindication. Having no accusation to bring against his servant—for he knows he has been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, and spoken what he believed was the truth in all he charged against the children of Israel—Jehovah, commanding him to stand upon the mount, shows why he led him to Horeb. *“And, behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.”* Neither in the whirlwind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice was the Lord God of Israel. *“And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.”*

Nothing can exceed in sublimity the scene the prophet witnessed while standing upon the mount before the Lord. It was awfully grand, and baffles description. No language can depict it even as conceived. And yet the reality was



far beyond the loftiest flight of earth-born genius. The whirlwind rending the mountains, and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord; the earthquake shaking the solid foundations of Horeb and Sinai; and the fire, like to them both in terrific sublimity, were appalling displays of almighty power. And yet the intrepid Tishbite looked on unawed when they passed by. But when the still small voice was heard, Elijah "*wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.*"

Whatever the manifestations which appeared to the prophet on the mount, they were symbolic representations of the two great methods of procedure that have distinguished God's government in providence and grace. The whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire symbolize the law given to Moses; the still small voice symbolizes the gospel of Christ. The first three represent the truth, the justice, and the holiness of God; the fourth and last represents his goodness, mercy, and love. But it must not be thought because God was not then in the three, but in the last, he never had been. For he had often been in them before these manifestations on Horeb, and he was often in them afterward. Not unfrequently, before Elijah's day, God had employed them to execute his judgments. In his day, before this grand scenic display on the mount, fire descended on Carmel from God out of heaven on Elijah's sacrifice. And afterward the devouring flame was sent on the fifties whom the wicked King Ahaziah sent to arrest Elijah. Before and after the coming of Christ, both under the law and the gospel, God's judgments were executed by whirlwind, by earthquake, and by fire. But these belonged rather to the dispensations of law, and symbolized its administration. The still small voice belonged rather to the dispensation of mercy, and symbolized its procedure. In the dispensation of law, symbols of judgment, but in the dispensation

of grace, symbols of mercy were the predominant characteristics. But neither was ever wholly the one or wholly the other. Judgment was always tempered by mercy; mercy was always under the restraint of judgment. In the Divine mind from the beginning a plan was devised for a reconciliation between truth and justice and holiness, which demanded the punishment of the offender, and goodness and mercy and love, which pleaded for his forgiveness and restoration to favor. Until this plan was fully accomplished by the sufferings and death of Christ as a full atonement, satisfaction, and oblation for sin, law and its sanctions held predominant sway. But after that, at the cross of Christ, mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other, grace and its precious promises of pardon and holiness succeeded to the judgment-seat. Symbols represented by the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire were much less frequent; symbols represented by the still small voice much more abundant. Under the first dispensation, truth and justice and holiness sat on the throne of judgment; goodness and mercy and love were advocates before them pleading in behalf of the guilty. Under the second, goodness and mercy and love are the judges; truth and justice and holiness are the law-officers of the Sovereign King, to see that none are forgiven who have not accepted his royal proclamation of pardon to all that believe on the name of his only-begotten Son.

But what to Elijah was the meaning of the symbolic representations he witnessed on the mount? They cannot mean, as applied to him, that God had never been in those symbolizing his judgments. For if not the whirlwind and the earthquake, drought and famine and pestilence and fire and sword had been used, in his day, to punish idolatrous Israel and their corrupters. All these had been employed at Elijah's word, before Jehovah passed by him at Horeb; and

the fire, as we have said, afterward destroyed Ahaziah's fifties. What, then, was their application to Elijah? How did they speak to him? They spoke to him in language, however symbolic, that could not be misunderstood. They told him the Lord God of Israel had changed his methods of dealing with idolatrous Israel. There had been enough of punishment—enough of fire and drought, and famine and pestilence, and sword and blood. By gentler methods God was about to speak to his idolatrous children, and their seducers. These gentler methods were represented by the still small voice. Having tried to win them over to himself by his judgments, and failed, he would henceforth seek to woo his people by gentleness and love. The law and its methods having been faithfully tested, the gospel and its procedure must take their place.

But in the symbolic representations Elijah saw there was for the human race a much deeper significance. What he saw was a revelation of God to Elijah, such as he had never had. The stern Tishbite had been well trained in the law, but he knew comparatively little of the promised Messiah. On Horeb it was more clearly revealed to him that God is love—that while truth, justice, and holiness are attributes of Jehovah-God, they are but parts of himself. The veil which obscured the future was uplifted, and God's prophet was given an insight into that plan of human redemption of which God's love is the procuring, Christ's death the meritorious, and faith in Christ the instrumental cause. If all represented by the still small voice was disclosed to Elijah, his prophetic ken saw the innocent Lamb of God led to the slaughter, just after Moses and himself conversed with Christ "on the mountain apart" about the decease their Lord was to accomplish at Jerusalem. He saw what the prophet Esaias afterward expressed in words: "*Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my*

soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust." And he heard the still small voice gently whispering in the ears of Judea's sorrowing sons and daughters: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

How much of the gospel was revealed to Elijah on Horeb it is impossible to say. But we are assured that God's goodness, mercy, and love—its distinguishing and predominant characteristics—appeared to him as he had never seen them before. Nor was this the first time God made such a revelation of himself. On the same mount, and standing, it is believed, at the entering in of the same cave, or clift of the same rock, where Elijah stood, God manifested himself to Moses, and made to him a similar disclosure. And it is remarkable that both Elijah and Moses had just come from scenes of blood, in which God's judgment had fallen heavily upon his enemies. The one went to Horeb from the slaughter of the priests of Baal at the brook Kishon; the other went thither from the slaughter of the Amalekites in Rephidim. And the Lord descended in a cloud upon the mount, and, passing by Moses, proclaimed: "*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and*

*abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."* And now mark the effects of the sights they saw, and the sounds they heard: "*And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped;*" and it was so, when Elijah heard the still small voice, no doubt making to him the same, or a proclamation like to that made to Moses, "*he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave."*

Such were the effects of God's revelation of himself as a God of goodness, mercy, and love upon Moses and Elijah. Both were subdued and awed by it more than by his sublimest displays of almighty power, and by his attributes of truth, justice, and holiness; and to us the sayings, "*God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;*" "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;*" "*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*" and "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God,*" are still small voices the Holy Spirit whispers in the ears of the contrite and believing, having in them more of God than all the thunder of his power. For we love him, because he first loved us. In the cross of Christ, who was the brightness of the Father's glory and express image of his person, God has given the greatest possible proof of his love, and the surest possible guarantee that he will also freely give all things to them that believe on his Son. Around the cross God's glory shines brightest. There is no power like the cross to save. It is not the earthquake, the darkened sun, the opened graves, the rent veil of the temple, nor even the resurrection of Christ from the dead, or the ascension to heaven, that draws, melts, subdues, and

awes, but the love of Christ, which constrained him to lay down his life for his enemies. "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,*" expresses that which gives to the gospel its greatest attraction and centripetal force. "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,*" is the still small voice that has in it more of God—for God is love—than all that was terrible and sublime on Carmel or Horeb.

But we saw, though God was in the still small voice on Horeb, it was not to be understood that he had never been or would never again be in the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire. And so we are not to think that because he is in the gospel he has never been and never will again be in the law. "*Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.*" The law is holy, just, and good. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfill it. The still small voice of Jesus of Nazareth, preaching to his disciples on the mount, unfolds its inner spiritual meaning. The mistake might be made that, because God is love, the sanctions of the law are no longer in force, and its judgments will no more be executed upon the finally wicked. So far from this being true, our blessed Lord preserves and enforces it with all of its sanctions. The commandments, "*Thou shalt not kill,*" and "*Thou shalt not commit adultery,*" he declares are not only still binding, but exceeding broad, so reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart that they are broken if one is so much as angry with his brother or looks upon a woman to lust after her.

Hence, we are not to understand that because God is love he forgives, without conditions, all transgression and sin. This is utterly to mistake and misapply the meaning of the still small voice. Mercy offers pardon to the sinner, but upon the express condition that forgiveness is asked with penitential sorrow and with implicit faith in Christ as the

only Saviour from sin. The cross does not take away God's hatred of sin, but displays far more clearly his utter abhorrence of it. The still small voice is a greater convincer of sin than the thunders and lightnings of Sinai and the whirlwind, earthquake, and fire of Horeb. The cross not only reveals God's hatred of sin, but discloses to the sinner his damning guilt. Whenever there is true conviction the penitent sees that his sins helped to nail Jesus to the accursed tree; and whenever there is genuine contrition he looks upon him whom his own hands have pierced, and mourns as a mother mourneth for the loss of her first-born. Hence, to resist the still small voice of the Spirit calling to repentance and faith in Christ is the sin of deepest dye, meriting the terrible punishments of that law from whose curse the blessed Jesus came to deliver us. It is as true now—yea, much truer, for where much is given much will be required—that, though God, as he proclaimed from Horeb, is “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,” he “will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation.” The guiltiest is the unbeliever; the most damning sin is unbelief. “He that despised Moses's law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Where-

fore, see that ye refuse not him that speaketh with the still small voice. "For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. . . . For our God is a consuming fire." Hear the still small voice proclaiming, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "He that believeth not shall be damned." "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! . . . And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell!" "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! . . . Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

But we must return to Elijah. When the prophet stood in the entering in of the cave, the voice of the Lord, after the still small voice had passed by, said unto him the second time: "*What doest thou here, Elijah?*" And he gave the same answer he gave when the question was first asked. The question is identically the same; and the prophet's answer to it, when asked the second time, is the same he gave at the first, word for word.

Poor Elijah! How he has been belabored here for impudence and obstinacy! What! Presumptuous prophet, do you dare to repeat your evasive answer and attempt at vindication after such a manifestation of the glory and majesty of the Lord God of hosts? Why do you not confess your want of faith and your cowardice and disobedience at Jezreel? Why do you not take back your evasive and



dissembling answer on Horeb? Why do you not humble yourself in the dust, and ask the forgiveness of your merciful, gracious, and long-suffering God? Why do you not acknowledge that, to save your life, you basely and cowardly ran away from Jezreel and duty? Would it not have been infinitely better, even if you had lost your life in Jezreel and to the cause of God and duty had died a martyr there? Do you not hear the still small voice calling upon you to repent in sackcloth and ashes, and implore the Divine pardon? and do you not see in it the proof—coward as you are, unbelieving and disobedient, evasive and dissembling as you are—that your gracious God is willing to forgive even such a weak, timid, faithless, and disobedient servant?

Poor Elijah! we repeat. Never was true, brave, obedient, and faithful servant to God and duty so misunderstood and so misrepresented! For never did Elijah the Tishbite, in all his weird and marvelous story, appear truer, braver, nobler, and grander than when he returned to the twice-asked question of his God the same answer he gave the first time. He was indeed subdued by the Divine presence; he stood in the entering in of the cave with his face wrapped in his mantle, expressive of the profoundest reverential awe. But the prophet of God has such courage of his convictions that he returns the same answer; he is profoundly conscious of his integrity, jealous for the cause of his God, and believes in his inmost soul that he has spoken the truth. Nor is his answer changed, now that he surely knows, whatever may have been his former convictions, the Lord God has altered his methods of dealing with Baalism and idolatrous Israel. For that was the lesson which was unmistakably taught him when he found that God was not in the whirlwind or earthquake or fire, but in the still small voice. It is now made certain that God will deal

with the Baalitic question by gentler methods than drought and famine, fire and sword. But this suits not the jealous soul of the impetuous Tishbite. He still thinks the work of extermination begun at the Kishon should be carried on, and never cease, until all Baalism is destroyed in Israel. And he is persuaded that can never be done so long as Jezebel and her priests are suffered not only to live but to have the controlling influence over Ahab and his court. His first answer was an expostulation with God for forbidding him to enter Jezreel, and making him flee from it for his life. He has no other answer to give to the repeated question, now that he knows, from the symbolic representations on Horeb, why he was compelled to leave the city of Ahab. The zeal of the Tishbite was not unlike the subsequent zeal of James and John when they wished their Lord to call fire down from heaven to consume the cities that rejected the preaching of the apostles. The answer of the prophet bears a resemblance to that of Peter, who, after our Lord announced to his disciples the death he was to suffer at Jerusalem, "*took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.*"

St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, calls Elijah's answer on Horeb an "*intercession to God against Israel.*" "*Wot ye not,*" says the apostle, "*what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel.*" St. Paul represents the prophet, by his answer, arraigning Israel for idolatry, profanation, and murder, and pleading with God not to show mercy, but to smite and consume. Hence, the second reply of the Tishbite may not inaptly be interpreted thus: "I have no other answer, O Lord, to make to thy repeated question than the one first made. For thou knowest, I again reply, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts. Thou knowest, O Lord God of Israel, I would have cut off them that have for-

saken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, slain thy prophets with the sword, and now seek my life, to take it away. And hast thou changed thy methods of dealing with Baalism in Israel? Hast thou no more use for fire and sword? Art thou less jealous for thine own honor than I thy servant am? If not for thine own sake, O Lord, wilt thou not avenge the wrongs of thine innocent, faithful, loyal, and persecuted prophets, who were slain with the sword by the cruel and idolatrous Phenician woman after having endured so much for the honor of thy name, and for thine house and worship? Wilt thou not pursue with fire and sword the foreign corrupters of thy people Israel? Wilt thou not remember the covenant made with our fathers, and destroy the idolatrous aliens who have seduced their sons? Wilt thou not avenge me, O Lord, who have remained so long, and in such trying times, faithful to thee and thy worship? Wilt thou not avenge thy servant upon those who even now are seeking his life? Speak, O Lord God of hosts, O speak the word only, and send me back to Jezreel, even as thou didst send me to Carmel! Give, O give to me the same authority and power thou gavest me at the brook Kishon, and I will not leave an idolater in Israel!"

Search the historic page, ancient or modern, sacred or profane, and there never was a more consistent character than Elijah the Tishbite. Loyalty to his God was his distinguishing trait. True in its letter, and in its spirit, was his own averment: "*I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts.*" Every act of his life must be interpreted by it, and was perfectly consistent with it. When Elijah's God, as we have seen, laid his hand upon and took away the life of the young son of the widow woman of Zarephath, whose humble cottage had afforded him a lodging and a refuge from his enemies, he felt that God's honor was at stake.

His jealousy for the Lord God of hosts was so stirred that nothing would satisfy him but the raising of the dead boy to life again. And when he was not allowed to use the sword in Jezreel, and was compelled to flee from it, the same jealousy which made him expostulate with God for the death of the widow's son, and agonize for his restoration to life, extorted the passionate appeals under the juniper, that God would take his life and let him die as his fathers had died. The same jealousy, which was moved because God brought death into the house of his benefactress, was excited to passionate remonstrance because God spared the cursed woman in Jezreel and her execrable minions. The entreaties in the upper chamber in the Zidonian city, while stretched upon the dead corpse of the child of the woman whose hospitality he shared, were intensely fervid from jealousy for the honor of his God. Wounded jealousy stirred him at Zarephath to remonstrate against taking away the life of the boy; wounded jealousy incited him under the juniper to decline the honor of translation, and to passionately cry for his own death; and wounded jealousy moved him at Horeb to make intercession to God against idolatrous Israel.

Nowhere was the consistent loyalty of the stern and bold prophet of God, nowhere was his exceeding great jealousy for the Lord God of hosts, so conspicuously and so grandly manifested as on Horeb. Neither the whirlwind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, nor the awe-inspiring majesty of the still small voice of the Almighty God, swerved him a hair-breadth from his first answer to the question, "*What doest thou here, Elijah?*" Horeb beneath his feet was not as firm as Elijah the prophet of God: The earthquake might stir the mount of God to its deep foundations; the whirlwind might break in pieces, and the fire might melt its solid rocks before the Lord; the awful Shekinah in the still small voice might subdue into profoundest reverence

the Tishbite, and cause him to hide his face in his mantle, but could not shake the courage of the convictions of his heroic soul, or make the slightest change in his truthful answer.

Grand prophet of God! The Lord God of hosts brings no charge of unbelief or cowardice or disobedience against thee; neither will we. He was no coward, or faithless and disobedient servant, whom Almighty God honored with the sublimest scenic display ever witnessed on earth, and, on his departure from it, with the ascension in the chariot of fire, borne aloft by horses of fire, and afterward with the sight of the transfiguration of Him whose still small voice he heard on Horeb; but one of the grandest, if not the grandest, of earth-born heroes, and the most loyal and faithful of the prophets of God. The ascension and the sight of the transfiguration were a double honor, which no one received but Elijah the Tishbite. Enoch was translated, but did not witness the transfiguration; Moses witnessed the transfiguration, but was buried in a valley in the land of Moab; Elijah was translated, and was present when Jesus was transfigured on "the mountain apart."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### ELIJAH'S FAILINGS.

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THE Lord God of Israel is not moved from his gracious and merciful plan by the remonstrance of his true and faithful servant. He has announced his purpose to change his methods of dealing with Baalism, nor will he depart from it. But he does not condemn his prophet. For Elijah has been loyal and faithful to the work he sent him to do. His complaints and petulance are condoned, and go unrebuked, because they have proceeded from exceeding great jealousy for the Lord of hosts. Yet his work is almost done; other work the Lord has to be done, but it is to be done by another. That other is to be Elijah's successor—a man as well fitted for the part soon to be assigned him as Elijah was for the part which he had to perform in the great drama then being enacted in Israel. Methods conformable to the law were the methods suited to Elijah; methods typical of the gospel are the methods adapted to Elijah's successor. The Lord God had no fault to find with Elijah, even as he had no fault to find with his own holy, good, and righteous law. For never was there one better qualified to administer law, and enforce its sanctions, than the stern and bold Tishbite. But as the law itself, under the Messiah, was to be superseded by the gospel, so now, as typical of that change, there was to be, for the time, a change of administration. Not that the law was to be annulled, its obligations cease, and its sanctions repealed; for its sanctions were to continue, and its moral precepts were to remain forever a rule of conduct. And it was not that the gospel, for the first time, was to be introduced; for

it had been in the world since God's first promise to apostate man. The gospel had always been God's plan for saving sinners; by the deeds of the law no one had ever been or could be justified. Faith in an atonement to be made, and in a Saviour promised, was always the only ground of forgiveness and acceptance with God. Abel's faith in the sacrifice of the promised Messiah obtained for him the witness that he was righteous; and Abraham's faith in the same sacrifice secured for him the same testimony. In Leviticus, salvation by faith in Christ, though veiled in types and rituals and offerings, was as surely a scriptural doctrine as in the Gospels and Epistles. Until the fullness of time was come the law and its sanctions, but when that time was come the gospel and its precious promises, were most prominent in the Divine administration. Hence the one, by way of distinction, was the administration of justice; the other, the dispensation of grace. The first, in its final development, preceded the second, and prepared the way for its full consummation. Even before the coming of Christ, God not unfrequently showed what would be the Divine administration under the gospel. He had just shown through Elijah, by the judgments which he sent upon Israel, what the law and its sanctions were; he now intends, through Elisha, by a dispensation of gentleness and mercy, to reveal what the gospel and its promises would be under the Messiah. Elijah administered the law; Elisha proclaimed the gospel. Elijah was the exponent of Moses; Elisha was the type of Christ. Under Elijah, God dealt with idolatrous Israel by the law and its sanctions; under Elisha, by the gospel and its offers of pardon. Justice was administered by the one; mercy was dispensed by the other. Law and its methods reigned under the one; grace and its procedure under the other.

But before we come to that part of the answer of the

Lord God which indicated both a change of prophets and of administration, we pause to consider the real failings of the Tishbite. Elijah had his failings, but he was not a failure. The prophet thought he was, because he had not been permitted to accomplish all his impetuous zeal had urged. Besides, what he really had done was hidden from him. Not until the questions and answers on Horeb was he told there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But the prophet did not know them, though perhaps they knew him, or at least they knew of him. He had not been for so long time, and in such days of declension and apostasy, faithful and loyal in vain. It was known to God's people that there was a true and bold prophet in Israel, clothed with power and authority from the Lord God of their fathers. His loyalty and daring exerted a secret but powerful influence upon many others—upon many thousands, as the number seven implies. That there was such a prophet in Samaria was a great incentive to others to be true to covenant-keeping Jehovah. Hence the Tishbite, even if he had done nothing more than what was done on Carmel, was very far from being a failure. Outside of the personal acts of the Lord Jesus there was nothing in all the Scriptures grander than the contest with the priests of Baal, nothing more pregnant with results to the cause of the personal God of the Hebrews than the answer by fire. It decided, and it decided forever, that Jehovah alone is God; and it gave to all Baalism the death-wound from which it has never recovered, and from which, sooner or later, it must die.

Among the failings of the Tishbite petulance surely, and perhaps anger, must be reckoned. And to them, as a natural sequence, must be added impatience and a dissatisfaction with the Divine administration of the affairs of Israel. But these failings came not from selfishness, vanity, or



ambition, but from intense loyalty to his God, from a consuming zeal for his honor, and from a burning desire to put an end to idolatry in Samaria and to silence forever every form of opposition to the personal God of Israel. Jehovah's methods of dealing with the Baalitish question were too slow and merciful for the impetuous and zealous Tishbite. He was fretted by the abominations of Ahab and Jezebel, and by the spectacle of foreign idolatrous priests lording it over the successors of Levi; and he was indignant because the Lord God would not suffer him to cut off all idolaters in Samaria. The Tishbite's feelings toward the idolatrous opposers of the God of the Hebrews were the feelings which the psalmist before him felt and expressed in impassioned numbers: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies." And he did no more than the psalmist when the latter prayed: "Consume them in wrath, consume them that they may not be; and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth." Did the prophet do more than the psalmist when the psalmist cried, "Let burning coals fall upon them; let them be cast into the fire?" or than when he uttered the imprecation, "Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down; touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightnings, and scatter them; shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them?" And what more did the Tishbite than they whose souls St. John saw under the altar, that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held? Did he not hear them crying with a loud voice, and saying: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" If the martyrs, whose robes were washed in the blood of the Lamb, cried out from beneath the altar in heaven for vengeance upon their perse-

cutors still alive upon the earth, surely it was not surprising when Elijah made intercession to God against idolatrous and murderous Israel, that had slain his brethren the prophets with the sword, and were even then seeking his own life to take it away.

These imprecatory intercessions of the prophet, the psalmist, and the martyrs in heaven proceeded not from malice or revenge, but from indignation at the persecutions of the faithful, and from the conviction that God ought to avenge their wrongs, execute justice, and vindicate his own righteous government. They were appeals to him, as the rightful King and Judge in Israel, to maintain his sovereignty and, by enforcing its pronounced and just penalties, to uphold his law. That law punished idolatrous offenders with death. Many in Israel were clearly and confessedly guilty of its open and flagrant infraction. To the sin of idolatry they had added the sin of putting to death many of God's true and obedient servants. And if the law of Israel's theocratic Sovereign and Judge condemned them, much more did it condemn the foreign priests who seduced them from their allegiance, corrupted their morals, and incited them to idolatry, rebellion, and murder. When, then, God's servants on earth or in heaven called upon him to punish idolatrous rebels and murderers, they invoked him to punish them according to his own law, to pass judicial sentence upon them, and to see to it that the sentence was faithfully executed. They who were alive asked it for their own protection and safety; both the living sufferers and the dead martyrs demanded it for the sake of their wronged and persecuted brethren, and for the honor and authority of their Almighty Sovereign. And in doing this they did no more than all true and loyal subjects of an earthly monarch who wish that the authority of their rightful king may be vindicated, and that the rebels who would over-

throw and dethrone him may receive their just deserts, and be put out of the way of doing injury to themselves, to their brethren, and to the government of their love and choice.

But we are not to suppose, from the invocation of the martyrs beneath the altar, that the happiness of saints in heaven is disturbed by transactions on earth, and that they are impatient because God delays to avenge their death. The scene which St. John beheld in apocalyptic vision was a symbolic representation; for nothing interrupting the enjoyments of the saints is allowed to enter the paradise of bliss to which their souls are introduced on their separation from the body. In a world where faith is lost in sight, and where they know even as also they are known, it is not likely that any dissatisfaction with the Divine administration ever exists. To the government of heaven's Eternal King the redeemed from earth implicitly submit, forever assured that the Judge of quick and dead will do right, and are never affected by a single questioning doubt. Hence, we are not to conjecture that St. John actually heard the martyrs invoking the vengeance of the Almighty upon their persecutors, and expostulating with him for his long delay to avenge their wrongs. The whole is symbolic of God's hatred of sin, and the certainty of punishment, though long delayed. And how could this be more forcibly portrayed than by representing his faithful martyrs crying beneath the altar for vengeance on their murderers? Will not God avenge his own elect on earth which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? and will he not much rather avenge those in heaven, who were slain for his word and for the testimony which they held? The whole meaning of the symbolic representation is that God as truly remembers the wrongs of the saints as if they were brought to his notice by their passionate pleadings for vengeance.

All anger, malice, and revenge applied to saints in heaven—no matter what their wrongs may have been on earth—are as figurative and symbolic as when applied to the great God of infinite mercy and love. And since he is represented as being angry with the wicked, and hating all workers of iniquity, like feelings are ascribed to the saints; and as vengeance belongeth to him, so likewise is it ascribed to them. But how can hateful and vengeful passions be imputed to him who so loved even his enemies that he gave his well-beloved and only-begotten Son to die for them? How can the gentleness and meekness of the innocent and spotless Lamb be turned into revenge and wrath? And how can saints who have the Spirit of Christ—else they are none of his—entertain such feelings? Is not love to their enemies and persecutors their distinguishing characteristic, even as it was his? Wherefore, if the great God who is unchangeable is actually angry with the wicked, and actually hates all workers of iniquity, how can he change anger and hatred into mercy and love? No spiritual alchemy, by any possibility, can transmute anger and hatred into such mercy and love as were manifested in the gift of God's only-begotten Son; nor can any spiritual alchemy reverse the process, and turn mercy and love back again into anger and hate. If mercy and love are unchangeable attributes of the infinite and immutable God, there is no possible place in his nature for their opposites. Hence, strictly and correctly speaking, God is always love. God never hates. He loves even when he punishes; and when he punishes, anger and vengeance are metaphorically ascribed to him. They are always comparative or relative terms when applied to God. He loves when he pardons, and he loves when he condemns; he loves when he gives, and he loves when he denies. The change is relative or comparative. To the truly penitent, the believing, and the

obedient, it becomes the love of complacency; to the impenitent, the unbelieving, and the disobedient, it is what it always was, is now, and ever shall be—the love of pity. A merciful and loving earthly father loves the child whom he corrects with the rod. And yet the mercy and love of an earthly father may be so affected by repeated acts of disobedience and rebellion as to be turned into cruelty and hate. But God's mercy and love are unchangeable. While he cannot pardon the disobedient and rebellious, and take them to heaven, he never ceases to pity and to love them, though unforgiven and lost. "If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace," shall be our blessed Lord's eternal plaint, because forever hid from the eyes of those whom he gave his life to save, and whom he loves with an everlasting love of pity.

Returning to the imprecations of the martyrs in heaven, we have seen that the whole representation is symbolic, and had no actual existence. But whether symbolic or not, prayers for vengeance were ascribed to them. Wherefore, if it were not out of place to ascribe to them such imprecations, they were not improper in Elijah and David. What would not be wrong in a saint in heaven surely is not wrong in a saint on earth; and that it is not wrong in either is because, as we have seen, revenge, when applied to the saints, must be understood as when it is applied to God. It is relative or comparative; it is figurative or metaphorical, and not that either God himself or any one who has the Spirit of Christ actually knows anger and hate as the carnal mind knows them.

But if the imprecations of the martyrs were real, and not symbolic, they go unrebuked. God does not rebuke them for their appeals to be avenged on their persecutors. He approves them; he gives white robes unto every one of them. "And it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a

little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." They were requested to wait, and to leave the issues with God. For sentence against an evil work is not always executed speedily. Punishment is often delayed. It is delayed that all long-suffering and mercy may be shown even to the slayers of the saints. As Christ died for the very men who crucified him; as he freely forgives all who repent, so will he forgive the contrite, though they were present consenting to the death of his saints, or slew them with their own hands. By goodness and mercy God would lead them to repentance and to faith in Christ. But what if they continue impenitent and incorrigible? Nothing is lost by delay. The punishment is sure; and it is only the surer if they have abused God's forbearance and long-suffering. For time is nothing with God. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. And all judgment belongeth to God. Wherefore the government of the affairs of the universe should be left, with implicit faith, in his hands. Prophets and psalmists, saints in heaven and saints on earth should commit all judgment to him. Vengeance is his; and he will repay when it is needed, and as it is just.

But as neither prophets nor psalmists, nor any others, know what influence God's forbearance and long-suffering may have on the wicked whom he permits to live on the earth, it is plainly the duty of the saints below to try to win them over, by like gentleness and love, to the cross of Christ. "Blessed are ye," says Christ who died for all, "when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse

you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." And an inspired apostle says: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

These were lessons which the still small voice on Horeb taught Elijah. The delay to punish idolatrous persecutors in Israel, and to avenge his own and his slaughtered brethren's wrongs, made him despondent, petulant, and dissatisfied with the Divine administration. This was Elijah's failing. Nor has it, since his day, been an uncommon fault with the true servants of God. His methods are often too slow for the impetuous and fiery. And to those who are very jealous for the Lord God of hosts—especially if they have been sufferers in his cause—his dealings seem too merciful and lenient. They would take government into their own hands, and make a short, and, as they believe, decisive campaign against sin and wickedness. And this feeling is intensified if the wicked and sinning are in honor and authority, and use their power to persecute and to slay. Knowing that all power is with the Almighty One of Israel, and that he can at a single blow overwhelm and destroy his enemies, they become petulant and impatient if he interpose not with the thunder of his might to avenge them on their oppressors. To suffer wrongfully in the cause of their King—to be wanderers and outcasts in his realm, to live in dens and caves, to know derision and scorn, pover-

ty and want, imprisonment and stripes, while rebels are in high places, in affluence, and in authority and power—seems to the loyal and obedient hard to be borne. At such times, to possess their souls in patience, and await the slow developments of providence, is the hardest trial which those who are very jealous for their God have to endure. To see the cause of their Divine Sovereign opposed and unsuccessful; to have repeated failures recorded against themselves, while triumph after triumph crowns the wicked efforts of their exultant foes, demands the most heroic faith, and a patience like to that of the Lamb that was dumb before his shearers, and opened not his mouth when led to the slaughter. But in such circumstances, so lofty is the virtue required that if the complaining sufferers are actuated solely by loyalty to God and zeal for his cause, and not by spiritual pride or vainglory, the Most High sympathizes with them, and bears with them as with the martyrs whose souls St. John beheld beneath the altar. For they do not and cannot see the end from the beginning as God sees it; neither have they entered into his counsels, nor could they comprehend them if they had. Where mercy should end and justice begin is known to God alone. Wherefore the Holy and the Just One of Israel does not blame them for not knowing what they cannot know. He treats such complaining children as a good and wise earthly parent treats a son dutiful and loving, but complaining because too young to comprehend his plans. For the father knows that if the son were older, and could see into his plans just as he sees them, his judgment would be as his own.

Neither are we judges of God's designs, nor of our own success. Elijah's petulance arose mainly from two causes: first, he did not have a proper comprehension of God's plans; second, he saw not the results of his labors. Not



comprehending the plans, he complained because God did not continue to punish with the sword; not seeing such fruits of his work as he desired, and hastily concluding that he was a failure, he petulantly asked to die. By the still small voice God gave him an insight into his future plans of gentleness and mercy. These were to be God's procedure in Israel, at least for the time. For if Israel should remain rebellious and idolatrous, and not be led to repentance by the forbearance and mercy about to be shown to their rulers, the new procedure was to be exchanged for severer measures. But Elijah was not to be the one to employ them; for Elijah had enough of blood upon his hands. And yet even he was to pronounce God's judgments upon Ahab and Jezebel for their guilt in the affair of Naboth's vineyard; and he was to call fire down from God out of heaven upon the fifties of the abominable Ahaziah. Hence the Lord God's reply to the prophet's rejoinder to his twice-asked question: "*Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus; and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat, of Abel-meholah, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.*" Hazael, who was to be anointed king over Syria, and Jehu, who was to be anointed king over Israel, were to be the instruments by which Jehovah would punish Jezebel, her wicked sons, and, if they continued impenitent, rebellious and idolatrous Israel. Elijah's successor, by whom God's changed and merciful plans were to be carried out, was Elisha the son of Shaphat, of Abel-meholah. Nor did the still small voice on Horeb withhold from Elijah the results of his labors in Israel. To show him that his work was not a failure, the Lord God gra-

ciously and condescendingly assures his faithful, bold, and loyal but despondent and complaining servant that he had left seven thousand in Israel, "*all the knees which hath not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.*"

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

ELISHA OF ABEL-MEHOLAH.

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**A**FTER the scenes on Horeb, Elijah proceeded to execute the commands of the Lord God of Israel. Hazael and Jehu, however, were not to be anointed by his hands, but by the hands of his successor. It was a revelation to Elijah of what was to be; the anointing of the kings was to be done by him through another. Elisha was the only one whom he himself was to induct into office. Accordingly, he went straight to Abel-meholah, and by the route to Damascus, as the Lord directed. From Horeb he went through the valley of the Jordan on its eastern bank. The care of the Lord God for his servant is seen in the road which he ordered him to take. The route beyond Jordan, through mountainous Gilead, he was to follow, because it was the safest. Instead of sending him back to Jezreel—from which some would have us believe Elijah ingloriously fled—God puts the wilderness beyond Jordan between him and the avenging Jezebel. Instead of ordering him back to the work in Jezreel, which it is said he ignominiously abandoned, the prophet's God selects the route which was farthest from it and less likely to be beset by the minions of Ahab's maddened queen. The same God who, to save the Tishbite's life, sent him to Cherith and Zarephath, and led him to Horeb, sends him by the way to Damascus beyond Jordan.

At Abel-meholah the prophet arrives. To this "Meadow of the Dance," as the name in Hebrew implies, the Midianites fled what time Gideon and his valiant three hundred

routed them in the plain of Megiddo, and drove them over the Jordan. It was situate somewhere within the borders of Manasseh, among the impregnable heights and difficult ravines of the hills of Gilead. There, in some valley or on some hill-side, was found the man who was appointed to be the Tishbite's successor. Before this tiller of the soil were twelve yoke of oxen plowing, and he with the twelfth. The grave Tishbite, without ritual, without speaking a word, cast his mantle upon the plowman as he followed his plow, and passed on. This was the whole ceremony of the investiture, though the novitiate was to succeed the grandest of the Old Testament prophets, and was himself to be second only to him. This symbolic action of Elijah was well understood by Elisha. What secret divine communication before or at the time was made to the son of Shaphat we cannot tell; nor do we know that he had ever seen Elijah, or that Elijah had ever seen him, before they met in the field of Abel-meholah. However this may be, Elisha recognized the Divine call, and obeyed. The oxen were abandoned, the plow was left in the furrow, and he ran after the departing prophet. And when he had overtaken him, and had asked and received permission to kiss his father and mother, Elisha returned, slew a yoke of oxen, boiled their flesh with the implements, divided it among the people, and, having bid good-by to father and mother and home, went after Elijah and ministered unto him.

For seven or eight years Elisha must "pour water on the hands" of Elijah before the servant can come into the room of his master, or the pupil take the place of his teacher. The Tishbite had no one, as we have said, to train him for the prophetic office; Elisha was trained for it by the greatest of prophets. How the future prophet bore himself during his novitiate we are not informed; for his name is no more mentioned until the day his master was

caught up by the whirlwind and borne aloft in the chariot of fire. But we may learn what it must have been from his ready obedience to the Divine call, from his entire consecration from the beginning to his future work, and from the splendid record of a prophetic life of three-score and five years. Like the disciples afterward who, when called to the apostleship, followed Jesus, Elisha left all, and followed Elijah. It is quite probable that of the twelve yoke of oxen plowing before him at the time Elijah met him, all, except the twelfth with their implements, were his father's. What was his own he sacrificed, making a feast of the flesh of the oxen, and with the wood of his plow and the yokes of his oxen kindling the fire which boiled it.

Very great and marked was the contrast between the master and his disciple, notwithstanding a like devotion to their Sovereign Lord and King and their strong attachment to each other. Never were men better fitted for the special service to which they were respectively called. Elijah could not have done the work of Elisha; Elisha would have failed where Elijah succeeded. The one was suited to the work represented by the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire; the other to that symbolized by the still small voice. Administering law and its terrible punishments was the peculiar province of the one; dispensing mercy and its gracious offers of pardon the genial employment of the other. Elisha was the complement of Elijah; Elijah was equally the complement of Elisha. Like the law and the gospel, both were parts of the same Divine administration, in which each had his appropriate place.

It is impossible to indicate more plainly Jehovah's changed methods of dealing with Baalism and idolatrous Israel than by the great contrast between his servants Elijah the Tishbite and Elisha of Abel-meholah. In their call to and in-

roduction into the prophetic office, in their manner of life, in their traits of character, and in their respective works, no two loyal, faithful, and approved prophets of the same God could be distinguished by greater contrariety. The Tishbite always comes upon us like an apparition, inspiring the profoundest awe and smiting with terror by his daring and by his terrible judgments; the son of Shaphat is introduced to us following his plow in the field, attended by servants for whose wants he provides, and full of tenderest solicitude for the mother who bore him and the father who guided his steps from infancy to manhood. We know Elisha's father, his tribe, his birthplace. Shaphat, a name well known in the genealogical tables of the Hebrews, was his father, Manasseh was his tribe, and Abel-meholah, in the northernmost portion of the territory allotted to the tribes east of the Jordan, was his birthplace. But we know neither Elijah's father, nor his tribe, nor his birthplace; nor do we know how he received his designation, or what it means. Elijah threw his mantle upon Elisha, and called him to the succession of prophets; but we know not what prophet threw his mantle on Elijah—whether any earth-born man did it, or whether it was done by God's own hands. Impenetrable mystery veils the Tishbite's life before and after his appearing to Ahab. Elisha's before his prophetic call may be inferred; all of it afterward is plainly told. Elijah was a child of the wilderness; away from the haunts of men—except in the widow's cottage by the sea, and then he was more secluded than anchorite in the rocks of Engedi—amid the lairs of wild beasts, in the caves of Cherith and Carmel, in the cliffs of Horeb, or beneath the white-blossomed broom-tree of the desert, he abode or found shelter for a night. If the Tishbite entered the cities of men, suddenly he came, and, pronouncing his terrible judgments, as suddenly disappeared. Though

he could be gentle and sympathizing as in the afflicted cottage at Zarephath, and kind and considerate as he was to the good Obadiah and the humble and repentant Ahab, he was rough and austere in his manners. And with these fittingly corresponded his personal appearance. He was known by his weird look, his shaggy hair, and rough sheepskin mantle. Elisha was a dweller in cities and an attendant at court; he was the friend and father of the lowly and the poor; and though honored and consulted by generals and kings, he was easy of access to all. In dress he differed in nothing from the great mass of his countrymen. His garb was their ordinary habit; his hair was neatly trimmed; a staff in his hand, when he walked in city or country, supported his steps.

No less striking was the contrast in the messages which these two great prophets of God were commanded to deliver. Elijah was the messenger of wrath, of drought, famine, pestilence, fire, sword, and blood; Elisha was the messenger of mercy, of healing, soothing, restoration, conciliation, and peace. Elijah was the Luther, Elisha the Melancthon, of his times. Preachers like Bossuet and South in sternness and intrepidity were echoes of the one; preachers like Fénelon and Leighton in amiableness and gentleness were echoes of the other. Elijah's coming pre-  
saged some new and appalling miracle or terrible punitive calamity to the enemies of Jehovah. Even the message of the return of dew and rain to Samaria was preceded by the descent of fire from the Lord God out of heaven on Carmel and by the slaughter of the priests of Baal at the Kishon. Elisha was hailed as the benefactor and, in their sorest needs, as the deliverer of his king and people. Even the soldiers of the Syrian invader sent to arrest him at Dothan, and smitten with blindness by his prayer, were restored to sight through the intercession of the gentle prophet.

Elisha's miracles were more numerous than Elijah's; and yet all were characterized by beneficence, except perhaps the leprosy of Gehazi and the destruction of the forty-two mockers in the wood near Bethel. The leprosy of Gehazi was no more than his lying and theft most richly deserved; nor is the other an exception when correctly understood. The word translated *children* is applied in the Hebrew Scriptures to persons from childhood to even forty years of age. It was applied to Isaac at twenty-eight, to Joseph at thirty-nine, to Solomon after he became king, to Gehazi the servant of Elisha, to the two hundred and thirty-two young men of the princes of the provinces who went up to battle with Ahab against Ben-hadad, to the servants of the Assyrian king who blasphemed the Lord of hosts in the days of Isaiah, and to many others in the prime of manhood. But it may be answered that the word *little* appears before children, and that therefore the mockers of the prophet were of tender age. No doubt in the idolatrous rabble from Bethel, the seat of one of Jeroboam's golden calves, there were little ones, and no doubt they joined with others much older than themselves in the derisive cry, "*Go up, thou bald head!*" But not one of the little ones perished. The older ones, who knew better, were the only sufferers. For the word *little* is not applied to the forty-two that were slain. Besides, the word there translated *children* is changed for another that also designates persons as old as forty. Hence, the omission of the diminutive and the change of terms indicate that they who perished were fully responsible. In deriding the prophet they derided the prophet's God. Indeed, they were most insultingly blasphemous; they made a mock of the ascension of Elijah, the stupendous miracle Elisha and the sons of the prophets at Jericho had just witnessed on the other side of Jordan, and of which it is evident these idolatrous repro-



bates of Bethel had been informed. Not crediting Elijah's ascension, they designedly went out to meet the prophet and insult him. Hence the derisive cry of these hardened idolaters, "*Go up, thou bald head!*"—alluding, by the epithet, to the short and trimmed hair of Elisha in contrast with the well-known long and shaggy locks of the Tishbite. "Go up, thou bald head, to heaven, as your master is reported to have ascended! Let us see you go up, and we will believe you:" this is the meaning of their mocking taunt. It was an insult more directed against Elisha's God than against Elisha himself. The mocking to which Elisha was subjected was of a piece with the derision which the innocent Lamb of God endured on the cross: "He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." With like derision the mockers assailed Elisha. "Go up, thou bald head, and we will believe thee," expressed their taunting unbelief in the reported ascension of the hairy Tishbite. And for this the Lord God of Israel sent the she-bears out of the wood, which devoured the leaders of the rabble throng from Bethel.

Hence, the slaying of the forty-two mockers was not Elisha's act. He did not send the she-bears. Israel's God alone sent them, if they were sent. But Elisha *cursed* them! If he did, he cursed them in the name and by the authority of the Lord God whom they impiously blasphemed. Elisha pronounced no sentence upon them; he turned them over to the Lord God of Israel. Wherefore, if Jehovah sent the destroying beasts, and turned them loose upon the mocking idolaters, it was his deed, not Elisha's. And if his, who art thou that repliest against God? Who will question the justice of his administration? We know that the Judge of all the earth doeth right. Nothing can be brought against the justice of him who so loved even his

enemies that for their sake he spared not his only-begotten Son. Nothing surely can be said against him who was so long-suffering to the Ahabs and Jezebels—the curses of Israel—who so recently refused his prophet Elijah when he made intercession to him against his rebellious children, and who, in mercy to them, removed the prophet of vengeance, and sent in his room the prophet of peace.

Wherefore, the two instances excepted—if they are exceptions—Elisha's miracles were miracles of beneficence. Such were the healing of the waters of Jericho, the supply of water to the famishing army of Jehoshaphat in the desert, neutralizing the poison in the pottage of the sons of the prophets, healing Naaman the Syrian general, and causing the iron head of the borrowed ax to swim after it sunk beneath the waves; so multiplying the twenty loaves of barley, and the full ears of corn in the husk, as to feed one hundred men, and leave thereof after all had eaten and were satisfied; raising the dead son of the woman of Shunem, and multiplying the oil in the pot of the poor widow, saving her from debt and her two sons from being sold into slavery.

Three of Elisha's miracles, it will be noticed, are repetitions of Elijah's—smiting the Jordan with the mantle and passing over dry shod, increasing the pot of oil, and restoring to life the dead son of the Shunammite. These miracles were exactly similar in kind to Elijah's; and yet the individuality of the prophets is preserved. The contrast, though not so marked as in the other miracles, may still be traced. With Elijah it is but a blow, and the waters are divided; Elisha smites, but accompanies the smiting with a prayer to the Lord God of Elijah. Elijah multiplies the meal and oil by which his own life was to be sustained; Elisha multiplies the oil to pay the debt of a poor widow and rescue her two sons from bondage. Elijah passionately re-

monstrates with God for taking the life of the widow's son; Elisha, though the Shunammite's son had been given to her at his request, brings no complaint against his God because he had taken his life away.

Do not the chief contrasts between Elijah and Elisha sufficiently show God's changed methods of dealing with the *Baalim* in Israel? We shall see this further unfolded before we come to the Tishbite's departure from earth. Is it not already clearly seen that Elijah symbolized the law and its punishments, and Elisha the gospel and its provisions of mercy? that the one typified the Baptist and his awful denunciations, and the other Christ and his precious invitations to them that labor and are heavy-laden? Indeed, the miracles of the son of Shaphat are reproduced in the miracles of the Son of Mary. Cleansing the leprous, restoring sight to the blind, multiplying the loaves, and raising the dead to life again, are readily suggested. But more even in his spirit than in his works Elisha resembled Jesus of Nazareth. There was like gentleness, kindness, sympathy. Elisha weeping over the woes which he knew Hazael would bring upon Israel reminds us of the Son of God weeping over Jerusalem.

Such was the man whom the Lord, when he spake by the still small voice on Horeb, ordered Elijah to anoint prophet in his room. Elisha was the green, smoothed, and gently undulating lawn, exciting our admiration by its quiet beauty; Elijah was the rugged mountain of cavernous depths and dizzy heights, inspiring awe by its sublimity. Elisha was the placid lake, nestling amid the hills of Galilee; Elijah was the great sea, swept and lashed by warring tempests. Elisha was the gentle dew on Hermon; Elijah, the swollen torrent rushing down from Carmel. Elisha was the whispering of the evening zephyr; Elijah, the deafening blast of the tornado. Elisha was

the reviving and gently falling shower; Elijah, the rain-storm, attended by fierce winds and the lightning's loud thunders. Elisha was the dove bringing the olive-leaf in her mouth; Elijah was the soaring eagle swooping down upon the fold, and bearing his prey to his mountain-aerie. Elisha inspired love; Elijah, awe. Elisha was a kind friend; Elijah, an austere judge. To Elisha we would fearlessly, but to Elijah tremblingly, tell our secret faults, our heart-struggles, our weaknesses, and our failures. To Elisha we would go in sorrow and in temptation, confident of receiving sympathy and comfort; to Elijah, when we have wrongs to be avenged or powerful foes to combat, we might appeal, knowing if he put forth his strong arm in our defense, our wrongs would be righted, and that under his protection we would be as safe as was Teucer from Trojan darts behind the seven-fold shield of Telamonian Ajax.

Nor did the contrast between the two prophets end with their lives; in death it was far more conspicuous. Fiery steeds bore Elijah aloft in a chariot of fire; Elisha, full of years, died quietly in his bed, looking out through the opened window upon the risen sun, and was buried by loving hands. His latest moments were attended by his sinful but grateful and weeping king, who honored his departure from earth with the same words Elisha cried after the ascending Elijah: "*O my father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!*" Though invisible to others, were the king's eyes opened to see around the bed of the dying prophet the same fiery steeds and the same fiery chariot which translated Elijah from earth to heaven? His last act on earth was an act of mercy to his troubled king. The arrow which the king shot by the prophet's direction was the arrow of the Lord's deliverance from the Syrian king. Even in his grave God signally honored Elisha. When the dead body of a man was cast into his sepulcher, no

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sooner did the dead man's body touch the bones of the prophet than the dead man revived, and stood upon his feet. The prophet Elijah, in the words of Ecclesiasticus, stood up "as fire, and his word burned like a lamp;" Elisha, according to the same authority, though gentle and filled with the Spirit, "whilst he lived was not moved with the presence of any prince; neither could any bring him into subjection. Nothing could overcome him; and after his death his body prophesied. He did wonders in his life, and at his death were his works marvelous."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

FROM HOREB TO TABOR.

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**E**LIJAH has thrown his mantle upon Elisha; Elisha has left all, and followed Elijah. From Abel-meholah they journey northward by the way to Damascus. Whither they went, where they lived, how for several years they spent their time no one can tell. About seven years upon earth remain to Elijah. Seldom, during the interval, does he appear, and then he comes and goes with the same startling rapidity attending his movements from the first. Meanwhile great public events are being transacted in Samaria, but in none of them has the Tishbite a part. From affairs in Israel, however, the Lord God does not withdraw himself. But his representative is not Elijah, but some unknown prophet and another named Micaiah. These events must be briefly noticed, because, before they are over, they will afford momentary glimpses of the great prophet, and show the end of Ahab.

Not long after Elijah left Horeb the noise of war was heard in Samaria. Ben-hadad, the Syrian king, with thirty-two kings, and with horses and chariots, having laid siege to Samaria, sent a message to Ahab demanding the silver and gold of himself and people, and the goodliest of their wives and children. When the King of Israel returned a most obsequious answer to his commands, the Syrian monarch was not satisfied. He threatened to send servants to search his houses and the houses of his subjects, and to take whatever was pleasant in Ahab's eyes. After consultation with his elders, the King of Israel, acting on their advice,

refused this demand of the Syrian monarch. Another boastful threat was sent by Ben-hadad, to which Ahab, with a lofty bearing challenging our admiration, replied: "*Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.*" The issue is joined, and a war for conquest and spoil on the one hand, and for defense and honor on the other, rages in Samaria.

Meanwhile the Lord God of Israel is no silent spectator of the opening contest. True to his changed purpose to deal gently with Ahab, he dispatches not the fiery Tishbite, but a prophet whose name is not given, to assure him that the vast multitude of the haughty Syrian should be delivered into his hands by the young men of the princes of the provinces and the numbered seven thousand of Israel. And to this was added the word of the Lord addressed to Ahab, "*And thou shalt know that I am the Lord.*" The king, encouraged, marched against the Syrian army; and went himself to order the battle. And while Ben-hadad and the thirty-two kings were drinking themselves drunk in their pavilions, Ahab and his little army swooped down upon them, and slew them with a great slaughter. The discomfited Syrian king escaped on horseback with his horsemen.

Again the Lord God shows kindness to Ahab. He sends his prophet to the victorious king with the warning, "*Go, strengthen thyself, and mark and see what thou doest; for at the return of the year the King of Syria will come up against thee.*" With the return of the year, according to the warning, the Syrian again came against Israel. Believing that the former battle was lost because it was fought among the hills where the gods of Israel were the stronger, the Syrians set themselves in battle array in the plain, assured that there their gods would prevail. In the plain before Aphek, in the east valley of the Jordan, Ben-hadad marshaled his army, more numerous, like the first, than there

were handfuls of the dust of Samaria; and over against them pitched the Israelites like two little flocks of kids. Again the Lord God sent his prophet to Ahab; again he promised to deliver the Syrian multitudes into his hands; and again he told him, "*Ye shall know that I am the Lord.*" On the seventh day after the two armies were pitched against each other in the plain before Aphek the battle was joined, the Syrians were routed, and a hundred thousand of their footmen were slain in one day.

Ben-hadad fled to Aphek, and shut up himself in an inner chamber of that fortress on the road to Syria. By permission of the humbled Syrian king, his servants girded sackcloth on their loins, put ropes on their heads, and went as suppliants to the King of Israel, saying: "*Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live.*" "*Is he yet alive? he is my brother,*" was Ahab's answer. The servants of Ben-hadad, who had told their master, "*We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings,*" taking courage when they heard Ahab call their royal master brother, answered, "*Thy brother Ben-hadad.*" Then said Ahab, "*Go ye, bring him.*" Ben-hadad came, and Ahab caused him to come up into his chariot. The Syrian promised to restore the cities his father had taken from Ahab's father, and that Ahab should make streets for himself in Damascus as the father of Ben-hadad made for himself in Samaria. So the King of Israel made a covenant with the King of Syria, and sent him away.

Thus the Lord God was faithfully carrying out his merciful purpose, indicated by the still small voice on Horeb, to deal gently with Ahab. Three times he sent his prophet to him; two great victories he gave him; and into his hands he delivered the powerful hereditary foe to Israel. And the Lord God told him that by these deliverances he should know that he was the Lord, adding the caution,



*“Mark, and see what thou doest.”* But there was no recognition of Israel's God by the victorious king; there was no acknowledgment of his interposition. If any thanksgivings were offered up for his triumphs over the Syrian king, they were presented to Baal and Ashtoreth, and not to the Lord God of Israel. Ahab gave no heed to the warning, *“Mark, and see what thou doest.”* Not consulting the Lord of hosts about the disposition to be made of the captive Ben-hadad, he ratified an ignominious covenant with him, and sent away the man whom he knew the Lord had appointed to utter destruction. Such was Ahab's ungrateful and ignoble return for God's gracious purpose to deal gently and mercifully with him and his people. Wherefore, God again sends his prophet to Ahab. And the prophet said unto him: *“Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.”*

The King of Israel, returning “heavy and displeased,” came to Samaria, the capital of his kingdom. Thence—how long afterward we know not—he went to Jezreel, still heavy and displeased because of the prophet's message, but flushed and lifted up by his splendid victories over the hosts of Syria. In Jezreel, hard by the king's palace, was the vineyard of Naboth. With desires enlarged by his recent triumphs, the victorious monarch longed to add it to his own royal grounds, and sought to secure it by purchase or exchange. When Naboth refused to part with the inheritance of his fathers, which he was forbidden by the law of Moses to alienate, the haughty king, greatly chagrined, laid down on his bed, turned away his face, and would eat no bread. But into further details we need not go, for we have already told them in the chapter devoted to Jezebel. But we then promised to refer to Ahab's connection with the infamous

transaction. We saw by what lying arts and murderous means the abominable Jezebel caused the coveted vineyard to revert to the crown. When Naboth was convicted on a false charge by perjured witnesses, and was stoned to death, the king, as soon as he heard from Jezebel that he was dead, arose and went down to the vineyard to take possession of it.

The wicked Ahab, instead of repudiating the infamous deed of his infamous wife, was too glad to profit by it, and add the vineyard to the grounds of his royal palace. While the whole execrable affair was being transacted the sleepless eye of Israel's God, from its first inception, was marking it all. He has work to do, not for the unknown prophet who promised to deliver the multitudes of Ben-hadad into Ahab's hands, and afterward denounced him for his covenant with the Syrian king, but for the prophet of drought and fire and sword. The fiery and bold Tishbite is the man for the work the God of Israel has now in hand. But where is Elijah? Where has he been? From some cave in Carmel, from his old hiding-place by Cherith, or from wherever was his place of concealment, the Lord God calls Elijah. *"And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel, which is in Samaria; behold he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."*

No matter whence he came, marvelously sudden was the action of the Tishbite. If he was at a distance, miraculously was he transported to Jezreel. For God delivered his message to the prophet while Ahab was in the vineyard of Naboth. *"Behold,"* said God to Elijah, *"he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it."*

Before the king has left the vineyard the Tishbite confronts him. The startled Ahab is the first to speak. His guilty conscience in a moment tells him why Elijah has come. "*Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?*" asks the astounded king. "*I have found thee,*" is the Tishbite's defiant answer. "*Because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord, behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin.*"

Pause a moment. Mark the sudden appearance of the Tishbite! He comes upon Ahab as if he had dropped invisibly down from the heavens above. Note how he delivers his Lord's message! He does not say, "Thus saith the Lord." But he says, *I will bring evil upon thee, etc.*, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked *me* to anger, etc. It reminds us of the time when he first stood before Ahab and said, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to *my* word. No wonder these startling apparitions of the Tishbite—suddenly appearing and as suddenly gone—and these untoward messages, spoken as if in his own name and by his own authority, led the later Hebrews, as has been before said, to believe that he was some manifestation of the great God, or some celestial messenger in human form. But Elijah, we repeat, was no more than man; he was of like passions with ourselves. But he was bold above all others. He fears not the king's wrath. He is in Jezreel. He stands in the presence of the monarch in Naboth's vineyard, hard by the royal palace. And where is Jezebel? Perhaps she is looking on from a window in the king's house, and is afraid because conscious of her own damning guilt. Where are her late threats to

take the Tishbite's life? Does he fear the Phenician woman and her minions? Right there in Naboth's vineyard, and perhaps within hearing of the palace, he denounces not only the king, but pronounces the terrible curse upon the queen: "*The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.*" And this is the coward who fled from Jezreel through fear of a woman! When he "went for his life," or "whither he would," at the time he left it before, he went because the Lord God would not permit him to enter it; he is now in Jezreel, fearless and defiant, because the Lord of hosts has sent him there. One word from his Sovereign Lord and King, and in one moment it would be with Ahab and Jezebel as it was with the priests of Baal at the brook Kishon!

Elijah has delivered Jehovah's curses upon Ahab and Jezebel, and is gone. Behold the king humbled and abased! The words of the Lord are sharper than any two-edged sword, and smite him to the heart. The pains of hell have got hold upon him. Rent are his royal robes by his own princely hands. Sackcloth he puts upon his dainty flesh. His guilty soul does penance by fasting. In sackcloth he lays down; and when he walks, he goes softly before the Lord. But the compassionate heart of the great God is touched. And straight the word of the Lord went to the Tishbite, saying, "*Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.*"

Let us pause long enough to mark three things: first, God's sending Elijah, though it was the dispensation of the still small voice, to pronounce his awful judgments upon Ahab and Jezebel for their guilt in the affair of Naboth's vineyard; second, God's infinite compassion to the humbled and repentant king; third, his tender solicitude for his prophet when he informed him of Ahab's repentance and

of his own changed purpose toward Israel's king. It seems to us that, of all the signal and preëminent honors conferred by the Lord God upon the Tishbite, the greatest was sending him the message concerning Ahab's repentance. Not so great was withholding and returning the dew and rain at his word; not so great the answer by fire on Carmel; not so great the aërial flight in the chariot of fire; and not so great the witness of the transfiguration on "the mountain apart."

But we must hurry to the end of Ahab's life. After the defeat of the Syrians at Aphek, and Ahab had three years' rest from war, he drew the King of Judah into a scheme to recover Ramoth in Gilead from the Syrians. A defensive and offensive alliance formed, Jehoshaphat asked Ahab "*to inquire at the word of the Lord.*" The King of Israel, whom we have just seen so humbled and repentant, forgetful of the great victories the Lord God had given him in the late war, unmindful of the woes denounced against himself for his guilty share in murdering and plundering the innocent Naboth, and regardless of his own repentance and the divine clemency shown him on that account, gathered together the four hundred prophets of Ashera, and impiously inquired of them whether he should go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or whether he should forbear. And thus they said, "*Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.*" The pious Jehoshaphat asked: "*Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?*" "*And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.*" Micaiah, when called, told Ahab to go up; but, at the same time, he candidly informed the king that the Lord had put a lying spirit into the mouths of the prophets, and had spoken evil, not good, concerning

him. Believing the prophets of Jezebel, Ahab, angered against Micaiah, ordered him to be put in prison, and to be fed with the bread of affliction, and with the water of affliction, until he himself should return in peace from Ramoth-gilead. "*If thou return at all in peace,*" answered the prophet, "*the Lord hath not spoken by me.*" And Micaiah added: "*Hearken, O people, every one of you.*"

What followed may be soon told. The two kings went up to Ramoth-gilead to battle. It was Ahab's last battle-field. In it he received his death-wound. The history tells how he went into the battle disguised; how he prevailed on Jehoshaphat to array himself in the royal robes of Israel; how a certain man drew a bow at a venture and smote the King of Israel between the joints of the harness; how Ahab died at even in his chariot, and how the king's blood ran out of his wound into its midst. The dead king was carried to Samaria; in that capital of his kingdom they buried him. And when the chariot, in which he was wounded and in which he died, was washed in the pool of Samaria, the dogs licked up his blood. And thus the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Elijah the Tishbite, was partly fulfilled. It was afterward fulfilled to the letter, when dogs licked the blood of Joram the son of Ahab "*in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite.*" Thus perished the wickedest king who, up to his day, sat on the throne of Israel. No further delineation of his character will we attempt. It has been sufficiently presented in the progress of the drama of Elijah the Tishbite. The life and acts of this wicked and idolatrous King of Israel are so interwoven with nearly the whole story of Elijah that no separate chapter need be devoted exclusively to him. In the hands of the great God we leave him, and hasten to the last interference of Elijah in the public affairs of the kingdom of Israel.

When Ahab slept with his fathers, his son Ahaziah suc-

ceeded to his throne. This bad king did evil in the sight of the Lord, walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother, served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel according to all that his father had done. Brief was his reign; in two years it terminated. He "*fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick.*" The alarmed king sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether he should recover. While the messengers were on the way the angel of the Lord went to Elijah the Tishbite, and sent him to meet them, and to inform them that the king would surely die. The Tishbite met them, delivered the message, and departed. The king's servants returned, and told their master how a man had met them in the way, and what message he required them to deliver. When Ahaziah asked, "*What manner of man was he?*" and was told, "*He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins,*" he said, "*It is Elijah the Tishbite!*" Then the king, incensed, sent a captain of fifty with his fifty to arrest the prophet. They found Elijah "*on the top of a hill,*" and said, "*Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.*" And Elijah answered: "*If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty.*" Instantly, as the fire fell upon the sacrifice upon Carmel, it fell on the captain and his fifty, and consumed them. The obdurate king sent another captain and his fifty, and with the same result. But when the captain of the third fifty with his fifty was ordered to go upon the same errand, the third captain, as soon as he saw Elijah, fell on his knees before him, and besought him, saying: "*O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight.*" He and his fifty were spared. The angel of the Lord directing the prophet to go down with the man, and not to be afraid of him, Elijah ac-

accompanied him to the king. The Tishbite goes into the upper chamber, and stands by the sick-bed of the monarch. With the same fearlessness which had ever characterized the prophet he charges the king to his face with his sin, and tells him he must surely die. And so King Ahaziah died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken.

This was the Tishbite's last interference in the affairs of Israel. To the last he was the "prophet as of fire." Twice only, after the scenes on Horeb, had he any part to play in the acts of Israel's kings, and on both occasions he was the prophet of wrath. The God that answers by fire was Elijah's God; faithful and loyal was he to carry out his judgments. A fitting end to the fiery prophet was the approaching ascension to heaven in the chariot of fire borne by horses of fire.

We now draw near to next to the last scene of the last act in the drama of Elijah the Tishbite. We say *next* to the last, because the last was the witness of the transfiguration. But before we come to the prophet's translation, mention must be made of his interference in the affairs of the kingdom of Judah. In it we will see the same jealousy for the Lord of hosts which distinguished all his dealings with his own kingdom of Israel. We have reference to the Tishbite's memorable letter to Jehoram, King of Judah and son of Jehoshaphat. Into the controversy respecting the time the letter was written we will not enter further than to say that its inscription to Jehoram is consistent with the fact recorded in 2 Kings ii. 17, that Ahaziah died in the second year of Jehoram, King of *Judah*. If this be so, Elijah was upon the earth while that king was upon the throne of his father Jehoshaphat. But is it not said that Jehoram, King of *Israel*—Ahaziah's brother—began to reign in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat? How, then, could Elijah's letter have been written to Jehoram, King of Judah?



Who will decide between these seemingly conflicting statements? If they are conflicting, we ask, which is the true and which is the false? To us it is evident that the truth lies not in eliminating either—for who has the authority to make the elimination?—but in recognizing both as true, and reconciling them, as Dr. Lightfoot has satisfactorily done. We have but to suppose that Jehoshaphat, because of the distant wars he was waging, associated with himself his son Jehoram in the kingdom. Hence this Jehoram was king over Judah—joint king with Jehoshaphat his father—several years before the latter's death. And hence to Jehoram, King of Judah, Elijah's letter was written. But whenever it was written, and no matter on what occasion it was written, it was in perfect keeping with Elijah the Tishbite. The letter fearlessly denounces the King of Judah for his sins, and predicts the terrible judgment of God which was to take him off. It befell the king according to Elijah's letter; the Lord God brought upon Jehoram all the evils which the prophet foretold—even the dreadful disease the Tishbite predicted came upon the wicked king in all its horrible and loathsome minuteness. And King Jehoram died unlamented and hated by his people, so that they "made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers."

But the time has come when Elijah must be taken up. From Gilgal two men, in deepest thought, are walking side by side along the road to Bethel. By their garb and by their whole demeanor we know the men. One of them is very familiar to us, for we have been long in his company; the other, though not so familiar, is yet so well known that we cannot mistake his identity. With the one we have been in many scenes. We saw his first appearance to Ahab, and heard him foretell the calamitous drought. We beheld him in his solitariness by the Cherith, when he was fed by the ravens, and drank of the brook. We were present

when at the gate of Zarephath he met the widow woman "gathering of sticks;" and we listened to his request, and the woman's reply, when he asked her for a little cake. We looked in upon him in the upper chamber of the cottage by the sea; we watched that barrel of meal and that cruse of oil as they were daily emptied and as miraculously daily replenished. We were eye-witnesses of his anguish when the widow's little son was stricken down by death; we heard his earnest remonstrance with the God of heaven for taking the child's life, and his passionate appeals for its restoration. We saw the proud triumph and the deep joy in his eye when he ga back to the grief-stricken mother her boy raised to life again. We followed him on his road to Jezreel when commanded to appear the second time before Ahab; we heard his sighs when he beheld the desolations brought by the drought upon smitten Samaria, and his groans at the remembrance that the sins and idolatries of the court and people had caused them all. We were with him when he fell in by the way with the good Obadiah, and heard all that passed between them. We were present when he met the second time with Ahab, and heard the charge and counter-charge they brought against each other. We listened when he commanded the king to gather to him all his kingdom unto Mount Carmel, and wondered if Ahab would do as he was bidden. On the day appointed we clambered up the side of Carmel, surveyed its enchanting views, and called up its many memorable associations. We saw the crowds flocking to the gathering—the king, the court, the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, the whole realm, except Jezebel and the four hundred priests of Ashera. We beheld the dauntless prophet of God, attended by a single servant, confronting the dazzling and splendid array before him. We heard the startling and searching question the bold Tishbite put to assembled Israel: "*How*

long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." We were astonished at the silence of the people, for not a word was spoken in response. We heard the intrepid prophet when he gave the bold challenge to the priests of the sun-god to make the trial by fire, and saw when he threw down his gauntlet, and defiantly dared them to take it up. We marked the surprise of the priests at a challenge so strange, and heard the people when they cried, "*It is well spoken,*" and thereby forced the priests to accept it. With bated breath we witnessed the contest. We saw the altar of Baal's priests; we looked on when they cut their bullock in pieces, and placed them in order upon the wood. We heard their fruitless cries to the sun-god; we saw how they were infuriated by the stinging irony of Jehovah's prophet, how they frantically leaped upon their altar, cut themselves with knives and lancets, and mingled their blood with the blood of their slain victim. When Elijah's turn came, we watched him repairing the old altar; we looked on when he placed upon it the pieces of his bullock, and poured on the water until it filled the trench he dug around it. We saw his upturned face and uplifted hands; we heard his short but earnest prayer to the Lord God of Israel. We saw the fire when it fell vertically down from God out of heaven, and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and licked up the water in the trench. We beheld the people when they threw themselves prostrate upon the earth, and when they arose simultaneously as one man and rent the heavens with the shout: "*The Lord, he is the God! the Lord, he is the God!*" We witnessed the dismay of the crest-fallen priests of Phenician Baal, and the blanched cheeks of Israel's idolatrous king; we marked the fiery glance in the Tishbite's eye, and his proud look of triumph over the enemies of the Lord God of Israel. We were

startled by his command to take the cringing, crouching priests down to the Kishon and slay them there. We shuddered when the fickle multitude, awed by the fire which fell down from heaven at Elijah's word, obedient to his command, seized the vanquished priests, dragged them unresisting down old Carmel's side, and with their blood dyed "the waters of Megiddo." Returning from the slaughter at the Kishon, we again went up the heights of Carmel, listened to the prophet's prayer for rain, and watched the little cloud arising out of the Mediterranean. With the first sign of the return of rain we observed the Tishbite's tender care for the humbled king. We ran through wind and rain with Elijah before Ahab's chariot to the entrance of Jezreel. Leaving Elijah before the gate, we went in with the king to his royal palace. We were for the first time in the presence of the infamous Jezebel, and listened when the king told to her the day's events on Carmel. We witnessed the rage of the queen when the king came to the slaughter of the priests, and heard her impotent threat to take Elijah's life. Returning from the palace to the Tishbite without the gate, we were present when the royal pursuivant delivered the bloody message of the maddened queen. We deeply sympathized with the disappointed prophet when frustrated in his purpose to go within Jezreel and put an end to Baalism in Samaria by the slaughter of Jezebel and her priests. We watched his reluctant departure from that summer residence of Israel's king, and accompanied him on his journey southward to Beersheba. In that extremest southern city of Judah we witnessed the parting between him and his servant, and guessed its significance. We tarried a night in Beersheba; next day we plunged with Elijah into the wilderness, and went not knowing whither we were going. At night we listened to his complaints under the juniper, and heard his

passionate prayer to die as his fathers had died, because he had accomplished for the Lord of hosts no more than they. We saw him eat of the bread baken on the coals by the angel, which was to strengthen him for the long, lonely, and unknown journey before him. For forty days and nights we watched him wandering in the wilderness or lodging in the cave on Horeb, and going for so long time without eating or drinking. We heard the voice of the Lord God calling to him, and saying: "*What doest thou here, Elijah?*" We heard his answer—the averment of his exceeding great jealousy for the Lord God of hosts, and his intercession against idolatrous and murderous Israel. We stood upon the mount, and witnessed the grand scenic display when the whirlwind rent in pieces the solid rocks, when the earthquake shook the deep foundations of old Horeb and Sinai, and when the devouring fire swept by. We observed the bold Tishbite, and saw him unmoved by those appalling symbolismes of Almighty Power. But we beheld him bow his head and cover his face with his mantle when the still small voice passed by, awed by the presence and majesty of the awful Shekinah. We heard the voice of the Almighty One calling the awe-stricken prophet, and again asking: "*What doest thou here, Elijah?*" We wondered when we saw that Elijah was instantly himself again; that neither the whirlwind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire, nor the awe-inspiring majesty of the dread Shekinah, moved him from his truthful answer. We heard him repeat his first answer to the same question word for word and syllable for syllable, and we thought that never at any time did the Tishbite appear grander and bolder. We thought that never before was conscious integrity tried by so severe a test; that the great God looked with infinite complacency upon a servant so true, so loyal, so bold, and so jealous for the Divine honor and the Divine

glory. We believed that if the Tishbite never before deserved translation in the chariot of fire, he deserved it then—if it be possible for any mortal man to merit such transcendent distinction. We eagerly listened, but heard the Divine voice speak no word of rebuke or of dissatisfaction; neither God nor angel, nor any inspired man, expressed or implied a doubt of the truthfulness, the consistency, and the ingenuousness of the prophet's twice-told answer to his God's twice-asked question. But we learned from the symbolic representations on Horeb—what we before believed—that God had changed his methods of dealing with the *Baalim* in Israel; that the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire represented the past judgments God had inflicted upon the idolatrous king and his idolatrous people; that the still small voice indicated his future purpose to seek to win them over to himself by gentleness and mercy. Yea, we recognized a much deeper significance in the symbolisms of Horeb. We saw the law and its terrors in the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire; and we recognized in the still small voice the gospel of the promised Messiah, and its gracious provisions of pardon to the humble and the contrite. We heard repromulgated the proclamation which the Lord God of Israel made to Moses, standing in the clift of the same rock on Horeb where Elijah stood, and comprehended much more clearly the revelation of himself as both “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin;” and as the Lord, the Lord God, “that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and to the fourth generation.”

These things we learned with Elijah on Horeb, and hence were not unprepared for the command to anoint Hazael to

be king over Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha to be prophet in the room of Elijah. With the Tishbite we went from Horeb, by the way to Damascus, to Abel-meholah, where we met for the first time with Elisha, and saw when the former threw his mantle on his successor. We journeyed northward with the two, expecting we were going to Damascus to anoint Hazael king over Syria, and thence return to anoint Jehu king over Israel. But we were mistaken. We learned, not then but afterward, that many years must elapse before the anointing of those ministers of vengeance; and we thought it strange how such avengers could be fitting instruments to carry out God's changed method of dealing with Baalism. But it was all made plain when we understood that Elisha, the minister of mercy, was alone to be anointed for the present, in order that God's gracious and merciful purposes toward his rebellious and idolatrous people might have free and unobstructed scope. And thus we learned that the avenging Hazael and Jehu were reserved to inflict God's judgments in the event his designs of gentleness and mercy led not the rebellious and idolatrous to repentance and to their old allegiance.

Hardly had we left Abel-meholah in company with Elijah and Elisha before they suddenly disappeared, and escaped our notice and knowledge. Elisha we saw not again until we beheld him going with Elijah to Bethel. But Elijah suddenly burst in upon us as we stood watching Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. We heard the terrible doom he pronounced against the king and queen; and we saw him, the moment afterward, vanish out of sight. We witnessed the humiliation and repentance of the doomed king. We were present when God informed Elijah of his purpose not to bring all the threatened evil upon Ahab in his own days. And when last, before our present meeting

with him, we saw the Tishbite, we beheld him when he met the messengers of Ahaziah on their way to inquire of the god of Ekron, when from the top of the hill he called down fire from heaven upon the captains and their fifties, and when in the upper chamber of the king he told him that he must surely die.

Along the road from Gilgal to Bethel Elijah and Elisha are now journeying. Their garb is unchanged. The one has the same shaggy hair, leathern girdle about his loins, and sheep-skin mantle over his shoulders; the other the same neatly trimmed hair, citizen's dress, and staff, which respectively distinguished them since first we made their acquaintance. Seven or eight years have passed since the elder threw his mantle over the younger in the field of Abel-meholah. We would like to know the place of their retreat, and how they spent those years. Were they spent in the schools of the prophets at Gilgal, at Bethel, and at Jericho? Was Elijah, assisted by Elisha, engaged during those years in training those pious young students for future prophetic and educational work in Israel? That Elijah and Elisha sometimes at least visited those schools may be inferred from the fact that they were both known to the sons of the prophets there. Or did they live, for the most part, in solitude, having no other company, unless some heavenly messenger visited their lonely abode? And were ravens commissioned to feed them? Were the barrel and cruse of the widow of Zarephath, or of some other, daily emptied and daily replenished to supply their wants? or for their morning and evening meal was a cake daily baken on the coals by angel hands? What an intimacy must have sprung up between those two holy men of God—between teacher and pupil, between the prophet and his successor! Elisha for eight years sitting at the feet of Elijah in the solitariness of some hidden cave on Carmel, or of



some umbrageous grotto by Cherith, or of some chamber in a secluded house by the sea-shore, or of some sequestered nook among the mountains of the Jordan or Gilead, is a scene without a parallel in any school, sacred or profane.

But we must not longer tarry to conjecture where they lived, or what passed between them, in those long years of retirement. We must draw near as they walk along the road to Bethel and are silent. Some deep concern is in the thoughts of Elijah; the greatest anxiety is in the look of Elisha. Does the Tishbite notice that the stolen glances of his companion are to-day more tender and loving than ever? And does he know the reason? Does the servant know why the master has been so thoughtful and silent? Does he guess what emotions are stirring beneath that shaggy breast? Does he know whither his master is going, and why he has left his retreat?

See, they have come to a halt! The Tishbite is the first to break the silence. "*And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel.*" The former has some hidden object in view which he will not disclose to the latter; the latter seems to divine it, and therefore answers: "*As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.*" The master makes no reply, knowing that such unwonted refusal, confirmed by such an oath, and coming from a servant so gentle, so loving, and so obedient, must have some secret and weighty reason. And so they went down to Bethel.

At Bethel they meet the sons of the prophets. What means their anxious look? Something of unusual moment must exercise them; for they have taken Elisha aside, and are telling him something which they do not wish Elijah to hear. "*Knowest thou,*" they secretly ask, "*that the Lord will take away thy master to-day?*" What do they mean? Who told them what is implied in their question? And

how does it affect Elisha? Whatever it is, Elisha does not hear it for the first time. He knows it all; and lest Elijah may hear, he bids them hold their peace. At Bethel Elijah requests Elisha to tarry. Receiving the same denial and the same oath, Elijah comes to Jericho still accompanied by Elisha. There the sons of the prophets put to Elisha the same questions and in the same manner which they of Bethel had asked, and received from him the same answer. The Tishbite, having tried in vain to induce Elisha to tarry at Jericho, saying the Lord had sent him to the Jordan, and Elisha still cleaving to him and refusing to leave him, the two went on until they came to the river. As they stood upon its bank, and in full view of the sons of the prophets, the Tishbite smote the waters with his mantle, which "*divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.*" "*And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken from thee.*" And Elisha said, *I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.* And he said, *Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.*"

The time has come for the complete vindication of Elijah the Tishbite. The Lord God of Israel vindicates his prophet by the most signal and triumphant departure from earth ever granted to mortal man. The unparalleled sublimity we will not mar by any attempt at description or enlargement. We tell it as inspiration has told it, and then leave it. "*And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*" And Elisha saw it, and he cried, *My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!* And he saw him no more; and he took hold of his

*own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.*" Taking up the mantle of Elijah which fell from him, Elisha returned to the Jordan, smote and divided its waters, and came to Jericho.

Elisha saw Elijah no more on earth. But we shall see him again. Ages have passed. Of their events, their changes, their revolutions, we cannot speak. At a single bound we land on the summit of "the mountain apart"—some say Tabor, but of that we do not know—situated somewhere in the Holy Land. A marvelous meeting we behold on the mount. Only six are present, but the six meet in the most momentous conclave ever held on earth. Three are of earth; two are of heaven; the sixth is both of earth and heaven. The three of earth are the fishermen Peter, James, and John, of Galilee; the two of heaven are Moses, the great lawgiver, and Elijah, the greatest of prophets; the sixth, of heaven and earth, is he who was in the beginning with God; who was before all worlds, and by whom all in heaven, on earth, and under the earth were created; who was born in Bethlehem of the virgin, worshiped by the wise men from the East, baptized in Jordan by the Baptist, declared to be the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, on whom the Spirit of God descended, and of whom the celestial voice, proceeding from out of the excellent glory, proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." By these sure tokens we know that the sixth—Jesus of Nazareth—is the promised Shiloh, the Saviour of the world, and the incarnate God. Before Moses and Elijah appeared upon the scene, Jesus and Peter and James and John had come up into the mountain to pray. And while Jesus was praying, "he was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Amidst this radiant and dazzling scene the celestial visitants de-

scended on the mount, and began to talk with Jesus about the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. The fishermen, who were his apostles, and were to be eye-witnesses of his resurrection, were overwhelmed by the glory streaming through the glistening garments of their transfigured Master. One of them, beside himself, when he beheld his Lord glorified, and saw the celestial visitants, cried out, and said: "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles: one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." And while he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud, as oft on Sinai and Horeb, descended on "the mountain apart," and overshadowed them; and the still small voice which passed by Elijah when he stood in the cleft of the rock on Horeb came out of the cloud, and said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Awed by the majesty of the voice, the apostles fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. Their Lord came and touched them; and when he said, "Arise, and be not afraid," they arose, and, opening their eyes, "saw no man, save Jesus only." Moses and Elias, having accomplished their mission, had vanished to their heavenly home. And this was the last view we have of Elijah the Tishbite.

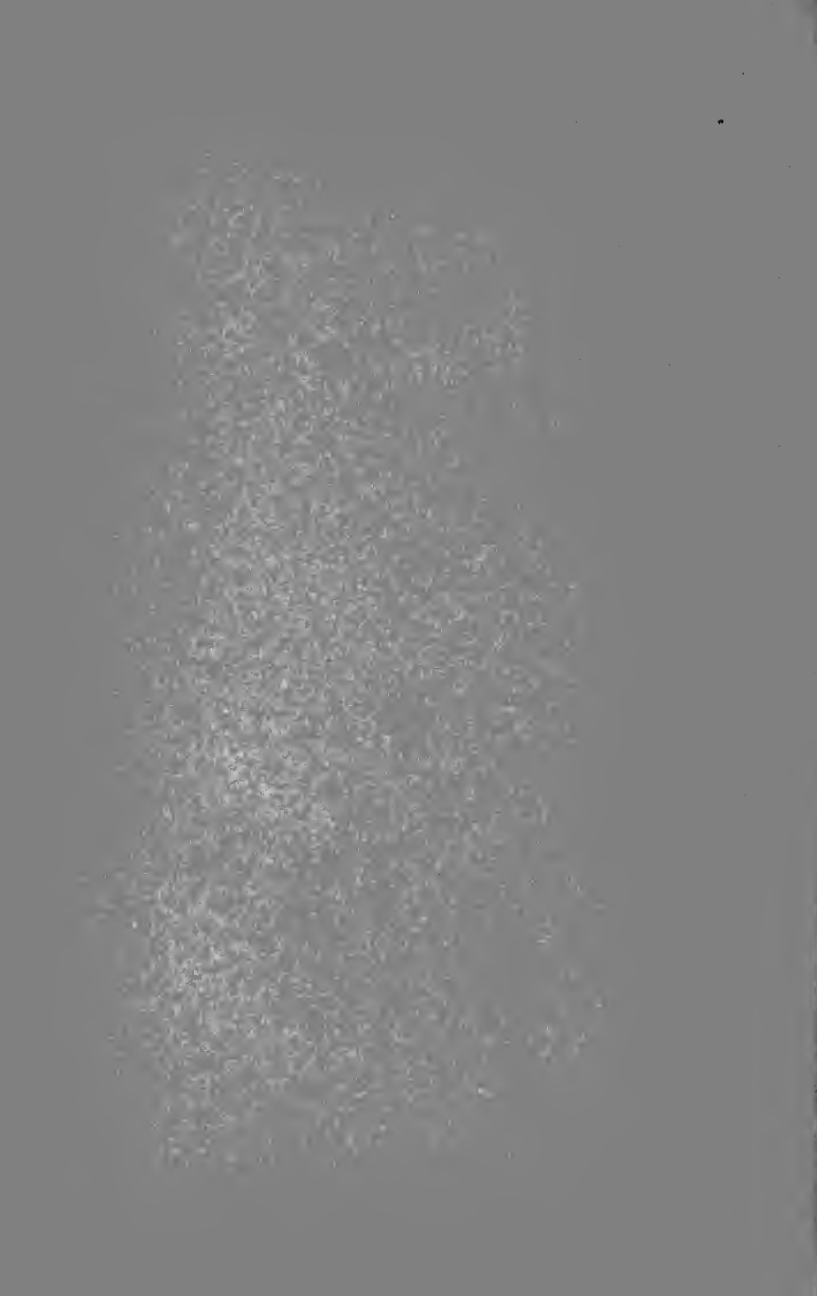
Down from the Mount of Transfiguration went the Christ—of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write—to meet the tempter alone in the conflicts of the garden, the pretorium of the Cæsars, and the cross on Calvary. Alone he drank the bitter cup of the world's woes; alone he trod the wine-press of the fierce wrath of the Almighty Father; alone he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; alone he gave his soul an offering for the sins of the world; alone he endured the agonies of the crucifixion, cried "It is finished!" bowed his head, and gave up the ghost; and alone he was laid away in the tomb. On the third day he rose

triumphant over death, hell, and the grave. Forty days he was seen on earth, and then ascended in a bright cloud to heaven, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for men. Exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, he is seated at the right-hand of God the Father Almighty, and thence shall return to judge the quick and the dead. At his name every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth. Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, and, according to the promise of the Father, by the baptism of fire on Pentecost, he must reign until all enemies are put under his feet. Victorious over all Baalism, and over all his foes of every kind, he shall be crowned KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not "the still small voice" of his gospel. Every tongue shall confess that Jesus, both Lord and Christ, is over all, God blessed forever. And an assembled universe—angels and saints in heaven, devils and damned spirits of hell, both the willing and the unwilling—shall take up the echoes of old Carmel when the Lord God of Israel descended in fire upon the Tishbite's sacrifice, and with the voices of many waters, and with the voices of loud thunders, shout: "THE GOD THAT ANSWERETH BY FIRE, HE IS THE GOD! HE IS THE GOD!" *Even so, Lord Jesus! Come quickly! Amen.*

THE END.













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